

**Dialogic Interplay of Power and Resistance in *A Fine Balance*: A Bakhtinian Reading**Mubashar Altaf\*<sup>1</sup>, Mr. Tassaduq Hayat<sup>2</sup>, Syeda Anam Azhar<sup>3</sup>**Original Article**

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**Abstract**

*This study explores the dynamics of power and resistance in Rohinton Mistry's fiction, A Fine Balance (2006). The present study is conducted through a Bakhtinian lens. We aim to study the interplay of power dynamics and the acts of resistance in the narrative. This paper analyses how characters negotiate oppressive power systems and how they challenge dominant ideologies. The research focuses on the multidimensional portrayal of power, and the strategies employed by the characters to question the system. We also explore the transformative potential of collective struggle. The study employs Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, polyphony, and carnivalesque to unveil the complexities of power and resistance. Key scenes and characters' interactions are closely studied to foreground the ways in which power shapes individuals' lives and identities. The individuals fight back and find moments of liberation and freedom from oppression and cruelty. The findings of the study showcase that power relations are fluid and it shows the potential for collective actions and reformation. The study contributes to the understanding of power dynamics in literature and the potential of resistance against all types of oppressive systems. It also highlights the potential relevance of Bakhtinian concepts for the analysis of complex social narratives.*

**Keywords:** Power dynamics, Acts of resistance, Bakhtinian lens, Oppressive systems, Collective action, Literature analysis

**1. Introduction**

The intricacies of power and resistance in Rohinton Mistry's fiction *A Fine Balance* (2006) unfold within the socio-political landscape of 1970s India. The present study explores the dynamics of power and resistance in the narrative, employing the framework of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts. It examines the interplay of voices, perspectives, and power structures. This study aims to shed light on how characters negotiate with oppressive systems. It explores the resilience of individuals and how they challenge dominant ideologies. Bakhtin's theories emphasize the multiplicity of voices and the dialogic nature of the narratives. We investigate the dialogic interplay between power and resistance. It studies how conflicting viewpoints and diverse perspectives contribute to the meanings of the narrative. Characters challenge social structure, hegemonic power systems and subvert social hierarchies. In this way, they assert their agency in the face of adversity. This research highlights the strategies employed by the characters to navigate and negotiate power structures.

We want to contribute to the existing knowledge and scholarship on *A Fine Balance* (2006) by employing the Bakhtinian lens. It enriches our understanding of power dynamics,

resilience, and resistance. This research focuses on the navigation and negotiation of the characters with the power structures and hegemonic ideologies. This study not only contributes to the study on *A Fine Balance* (2006) but also foregrounds the significance of Bakhtin's theories in understanding the complexities of the power dynamics and strategies employed by the characters against hegemonic power structures.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

2. To analyze the portrayal of power dynamics in *A Fine Balance* (2006) through a Bakhtinian lens, examining how different characters and social groups exert and maintain power within the narrative.
3. To explore the various strategies of resistance and agency employed by the characters in the novel as they navigate oppressive systems and challenge dominant ideologies, considering how Bakhtin's concept of dialogism informs these acts of resistance.
4. To examine the interplay of voices and perspectives within the novel, analyzing how conflicting viewpoints and diverse social positions contribute to the negotiation of power and resistance by the characters.
5. To evaluate the significance of Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque in enhancing our understanding of the complexities of power dynamics and resistance strategies depicted in "*A Fine Balance* (2006)," highlighting their impact on the construction of meaning and the portrayal of the socio-political landscape.

### 1.2. Research Questions

2. How does the concept of dialogism, as proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, help in understanding the dynamics of power and resistance within the narrative of *A Fine Balance* (2006)?
3. What are the different forms of power depicted in the novel, and how do the characters navigate and challenge these power structures through acts of resistance and agency?
4. How does the interplay of voices and perspectives in *A Fine Balance* (2006) contribute to the portrayal of power dynamics and the negotiation of resistance by the characters?
5. In what ways do Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque manifest in the portrayal of power and resistance in *A Fine Balance* (2006), and how do these concepts enhance our understanding of the complex socio-political landscape depicted in the novel?

### 1.3. Significance of the Study

The present study contributes to the existing scholarship by using Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic framework to analyze the power dynamics and resistance in *A Fine Balance* (2006). It broadens our understanding of the novel. It enriches literary discourse by offering a new perspective. This study examines the intricate interplay of the dynamics of power and resistance. It highlights the oppressed individuals and their navigation and negotiation against ruthless power systems. It highlights the strategies employed by the characters to challenge dominant and hegemonic ideologies. It explores and offers insights into the complexities of power dynamics and the acts of resistance in literature.

It also shows the relevance and applicability of Mikhail Bakhtin's theories, such as dialogic, polyphony, heteroglossia, and carnivalesque. Their application to *A Fine Balance* (2006) shows their value in unpacking complex narratives. This study is conducted around the socio-political landscape of 1970s India painted in the novel. In this context resilience and power relations are examined. It gives us insight into the broader social and historical issues and events

that shape experience. it contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the existing scholarship around the novel.

It provides awareness of the power struggle and social inequality. It highlights the potential for resistance in various contexts. This study is highly relevant to contemporary discussions on oppression, individual agency, and social justice. It also showcases the applicability of Bakhtinian theory on fiction and its role in highlighting the discourse on social issues.

## 2. Literature Review

The review for the study provides an overview of existing scholarship related to resistance, power dynamics, and the application of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts in the analysis of literature. It establishes the foundation for the present research work by synthesizing the main ideas and identifying the research gap in the literature. the concept of power and resistance within the literature has been extensively explored. Critics and theorists such as Edward Said and Michel Foucault have studied the intricate relationship between power, discourse, and social structure. They explored how power operates and shapes social dynamics. Their concepts provide theoretical frames to study and analyze power dynamics and resistance in literary texts.

Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism has gained prominence in the field of literary theory. His ideas especially polyphony, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque have proven influential in understanding the complexities of the voices, intertextuality, and representation of social realities. Several researchers and scholars have applied Bakhtinian theories to various works of literature.

While existing research has explored concepts of Mikhail Bakhtin concerning literature, there is still a dearth of studies specifically addressing their application to Rohinton Mistry's fiction. Mistry's works are known for their portrayal of social injustices and individual struggles. *A Fine Balance* (2006) provides a fine ground for the examination of power dynamics and resistance by the oppressed and marginalized groups. This study aims to bridge the research gap and contribute to a deeper understanding of the power and strategies of resistance in the fiction of Mistry.

Previous analyses of the fiction primarily focused on themes such as human resilience, the impact of historical events, and social inequality. We find, there is a need to explore the dialogic interplay of power and resistance within the novel. This study delves into the narrative structure, characters' interactions, and linguistic dynamics to uncover the manifestations of power and resistance. This study builds upon previous research efforts and scholarship. It extends the understanding of power dynamics and resistance strategies within *A Fine Balance* (2006) through a Bakhtinian lens. The literature review provides the necessary context for the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the narrative dialogic interplay of power and resistance.

One notable study by "Theme of Resistance in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (2006)" by Pashupati Raj Koirala. This study highlights the acts of resistance from the subalterns. It explores the atrocities and brutalities faced by the downtrodden and marginalized characters in the fiction of Mistry. Mistry portrays the growing consciousness and resistance among the subalterns. On the other hand K. Gobinath and Dr. S. Alexander in their work, "Diasporic Diversion in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (2006)", explores the various diversions that occur through the diaspora. For instance professional diversion, residential diversion, political diversion, and religious diversion. It focuses on the experiences of the Parsi community and the untouchables in the narrative. It highlights the theme of displacement and cultural differences. In the article, "Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (2006): A Study of Emergency and Common People" by Kanchan Mohindra, the

impact of the political act of Emergency on the lives of common people has been explored. It studies how Emergency affects the four different characters from different backgrounds. It portrays the hope and despair in the face of political upheaval. And T. ABirami and Dr. P. Kiruthika in their work, "A Struggle for Identity and Survival in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (2006)", explains the struggle for identity and survival. It highlights how characters with ambitions, and dreams struggle in the modern world. It showcases the themes of social and cultural differences.

Another research attempt on Rohinton Mistry's work, *A Fine Balance* (2006). Different authors have studied this work from various angles. For instance R. Jesudas and K. Chelladuri in their article, "The Voice of the Marginalised in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (2006)", explore the author's sense of displacement and construction of his new identity. The researchers focus on the themes of social and political background in the novel and how Mistry revisits the history of his homeland. They found the concept of hybridity applicable to the study. In another article named, "Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (2006) and Dystopia" by Pramod Kumar P.S. this study analyzes the novel as a dystopian world where Nehruvian consensus is declining. There is rampant poverty and political decay. Post-independence Indian society is painted as a state of despotism. Marginalized are facing a dystopian world.

This review provides insights into the various concepts in the narrative including power, resistance, identity and social and political issue, marginalization, diaspora, and dystopia. But no one yet looked through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin and explores the dialogic interplay of power and resistance. Our study is unique and diverse as it provides insights and it contributes to the wider understanding and analysis of power dynamics and resistance strategies in the sociopolitical context portrayed in *A Fine Balance* (2006).

### 3. Research Methodology

It is a qualitative study. It applies Bakhtinian concepts to the text of *A Fine Balance* (2006). It employs the following research methods.

#### 3.1. Research Design

The researchers adopt a qualitative research design to examine the interplay of power and resistance within the text. It employs the lens of Bakhtinian theory. Qualitative research methods allow for a deep understanding of the complexities inherent in power dynamics and resistance strategies.

#### 3.2. Data Collection

The text of the novel itself is taken as the primary source of data for the analysis. Close and multiple readings of the text and textual analysis will be conducted to explore the acts of resistance, dialogic elements, and instances of power dynamics. For in-depth analysis, the relevant dialogues, scenes, and passages are selected.

#### 3.3. Conceptual Framework

The study adopts Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts as a conceptual framework such as dialogism, heteroglossia, polyphony, and carnivalesque. We analyzed through this lens to study the interplay of voices, resistance, and power structures within the narrative.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

The analysis is conducted on the selected data, for instance, dialogues, scenes, and passages. The data will be subjected to thematic analysis. Recurring themes related to power and resistance will be identified through the lens of Bakhtinian theory. Bakhtin's concepts allow for the identification of patterns, contradictions, and complexities within the narrative.

### 3.5. Interpretation

The selected data is interpreted through the lens of the conceptual framework of Bakhtinian theory. The findings are discussed concerning the research objectives and research questions. It highlights the dialogic interplay of power and resistance in the narrative of *A Fine Balance* (2006).

### 3.6. Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. The qualitative approach limits the generalizability of the findings of the study. It focuses on the in-depth study of the specific issue. There are subjective elements to the interpretations generated by the researchers. Authors' opinions and prejudices may influence the interpretations and findings of the study. But this study allows us a rigorous exploration of the text and it contributes to a deeper understanding of power dynamics and resistance strategies employed by the characters in the novel against the oppressive systems.

### 3.7. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the present study explores and examines the dynamics of power and resistance in Mistry's fiction, *A Fine Balance* (2006), through a Bakhtinian lens. The researchers aim to examine how power dynamics shape the characters' lives and identities. How different characters navigate through the circumstances and negotiate oppressive systems and hegemonic ideologies. The study centers upon the multidimensional display of power and the strategies employed by the characters for resistance and the transformative potential of collective struggle against dominance and oppression. Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony, dialogism, and carnivalesque are employed by the researchers to explore the intricacies of power and resistance in the narrative. The researchers consult books such as *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, "Speech Genres and Other Late Essays", and "Toward a Philosophy of the Act", for the analysis and interpretation of the selected text from Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (2006).

#### 3.7.1. Dialogism

It emphasizes the significance of dialogue and interaction between different voices and perspectives and shapes meanings. Mikhail Bakhtin writes in his work, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1992), "The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it, the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object" (p. 279). The concept of dialogism helps us in understanding the dynamics of power and resistance within the narrative of *A Fine Balance* (2006). This interplay of voices contributes to the navigation and negotiation of power and resistance by the characters in the text.

#### 3.7.2. Polyphony

It refers to the coexistence of multiple discourses and voices in the narrative. In the text of the novel, *A Fine Balance* (2006), different characters from different social backgrounds hold unique perspectives due to their unique context and experience. Mikhail (1981) writes, "All words have the taste of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person,

a generation, an age group, the day and hour" (Toward a Philosophy of the Act, p.293 ). The narrative portrays these multiple voices that help us to explore the power dynamics and the challenges faced by the characters in their lives.

### **3.7.3. Heteroglossia**

It refers to the presence of multiple languages and discourses within the narrative. Bakhtin says in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* "Every utterance is a link in the chain of ongoing dialogic interaction of speech and its object" (p.293). The novel incorporates diverse linguistic backgrounds and cultural experiences. Bakhtin writes "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others" (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, p. 294). The heteroglossia structure of the narrative enhances the ability of the novel to portray the complexities of power dynamics. It contributes to the intricacies and subtleties of the fiction. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the ultimate and absolute unit of the semiotic organization of any utterance is the word. But in any given instance of its actualization, the word is wedded to a specific context, a specific speaker, and a specific addressee, and this union is unbreakable.

### **3.7.4. Carnavalesque**

The carnivalesque elements in the narrative serve as subversive tools against hegemonic ideologies. Festive actions provide moments of relief and liberation from oppressive structures. Carnavalesque elements foster resistance and challenge the hegemony.

The examination of power dynamics in the novel, *A Fine Balance* (2006) explores various forms of power displayed in the narrative, such as caste power, gender power, and socioeconomic power. "The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's "own" only when the speaker populates it with his intention, his accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, 1992, pp. 293-294). The characters hold different positions within the social hierarchy and their experiences of power and oppression differ accordingly. The novel uncovers the unequal distribution of power and corrupting influence of power on society. The characters employ different methods of resistance against oppressive rule. Their resistance displays resilience, navigation, and the ability to negotiate power structure. The novel displays various forms of perspectives through multiple narrators and characters. Different voices converge in the narrative and form a complex narrative. A shifting narrative allows the readers to experience different struggles, thoughts ideas, desires, and experiences. This interplay of perspectives and voices fosters empathy among the readers and it enables them to understand the power dynamics and resistance.

## **4. Data Analysis**

In this section of the study, the researchers explore the dynamics of power and resistance in the novel, *A Fine Balance* (2006) by Rohinton Mistry. Dialogism by Michail Bakhtin is used as the lens to study the novel. We analyze how the text incorporates multiple voices to portray power dynamics and acts of resistance. It highlights the importance of dialogue and interaction between different viewpoints and diverse voices in forming meanings. The analysis centers on the theme of power and resistance concerning the caste discrimination, gender inequality, socioeconomic disparities, and political corruption portrays in the text of the novel. The researcher examines how the characters challenge the different forms of power in society and showcase the human capacity for resistance and resilience in the face of adversity. The researcher also explores the concepts of polyphony and heteroglossia. It illustrates the coexistence of multiple voices and discourses in the novel. We also examine the carnivalesque elements as subversive tools against an oppressive

system. The text examines how individuals employ strategies to resist and challenge hegemonic power structures.

#### 4.1. Dynamics of Power and Resistance

*A Fine Balance* (2006) which is written in 1995 by Rohinton Mistry incorporates into its narrative the dynamics of power and resistance that we can understand through the lens of dialogism provided by Mikhail Bakhtin in his famous book, *The Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin's Dialogism highlights the significance of dialogue and interaction between different perspectives and voices in forming meanings. This concept is highly relevant in exploring power dynamics and acts of resistance. The text is woven around the social historical period of 1970s India which is marked by different types of oppression, for instance, caste discrimination, economic disparity, and political corruption.

There is also discrimination based on gender. "Dina thought of the unbearable wrongness of being a woman, where even if you were not very smart, as she privately admitted she was not, you were not taken seriously" (p. 51). It highlights the power dynamics related to gender, illustrating the struggle and resistance faced by women like Dina in a patriarchal society. But she resisted the patriarchal norms and expectations. This type of resistance is also showcased by the lower social groups. "They just take it for granted that you have no choice but to agree. So I never agree" (p. 256). This line spoken by Ishvar showcases his resistance against the oppressive power of the higher castes, highlighting his determination to assert his agency and challenge the predetermined roles imposed upon him. Dina says to a corrupt government official "Don't think I don't know the difference between having an education and having common sense" (p. 381). It exemplifies her defiance against the abuse of power and her use of wit and intelligence as a form of resistance. It also highlights the characters' resistance and resilience in the face of such oppressive ideologies.

This novel, *A Fine Balance* (2006) beautifully portrays the dynamics of power and resistance. We can find many instances in the novel where different characters either challenge or negotiate different forms of power in society. The text foregrounds the human capacity for resistance and resilience in the face of adversity.

#### 4.2. Multiple Voices and Perspectives

Different social positions and different ideologies are represented by multiple voices in the text. It is the central aspect of dialogism. *A Fine Balance* (2006) incorporates various perspectives by presenting different characters from different social classes. For instance, Dina Dalal, Ishvar, Omprakash, and Maneck are from different social backgrounds. But all have their voice in the text that show their diverse experience and unique perspective. Dina Dalal suffers due to her being a woman and being a divorced woman is a kind of double crime in that society. "She had discovered the hardest part of being a widow: having no one to talk to but oneself. It was difficult to make up conversations for two. There were too many gaps" (p. 14). It shows the experience of Dina Dalal as a widow in that society. It also reflects her isolation. But there are some characters like Ishvar who use his silence as a tool to defy the power. "They will beat us down further until we all crawl and grovel and beg for mercy, but we won't do that. They can kill us, but they cannot make us talk" (p. 115). It expresses Ishvar's determination and resistance to the oppressive power.

Different characters from different social backgrounds often face difficulty in communication. "He (Maneck) felt he could not belong. There was a wall of custom and religion separating him from them (Ishvar and Omprakash), and he was certain that when they thought of

him, they felt the same" (p. 163). It shows the barriers and differences that exist in that society and city having different classes and voices. Some people remain invisible in city life. "But still they (Ishvar and Omprakash) remained invisible to the city's life. They were marginal people, whom the city chose to ignore" (p. 293). Ishvar and Omprakash get no recognition and get only the marginalized position in the city.

It is obvious how this novel, *A Fine Balance* (2006) incorporates multiple voices. Each voice has a unique perspective on life and the problems of life. The novel showcases the myriad viewpoints and multidimensional portrayal of power dynamics and challenges faced by the characters in their lives.

#### 4.3. Polyphony and Heteroglossia

This concept of Bakhtin is also linked to the coexistence of the multiple voices in the text. And heteroglossia refers to the presence of different languages and discourses. *A Fine Balance* (2006) offers a rich experience and instances of polyphony and heteroglossia in the form of different dialects, languages, and sociocultural backgrounds. This element is also linked to the power dynamics. Polyphony offers multiple perspectives and it gives the potential for resistance and difference. It presents diverse experiences that contribute to the complexity of the novel as a dialogic text.

Different characters have different backgrounds and language and discourses for instance Dina Dalal belongs to the Parsi community and learned English and Omprakash who had learned his mother tongue from his illiterate mother took pleasure in confusing Urdu and Gujarati speakers by tossing words from one language to the other without much noticing. It highlights the linguistic diversity in the city and heteroglossia in the text.

#### 4.4. Power and Subversion

Marginalized individuals often employ strategies to resist power. In the text, characters are in a dialogic position and constantly negotiate their oppressive positions within the social system and hierarchy. "What the ages had put together, Dukhi had dared to break asunder, and he had turned cobblers into tailors, distorting society's timeless balance. Crossing the line of caste had to be punished with the utmost severity" (p.147). According to Bakhtin power is never a monolithic force but it always be contested and resistance always emerges through dialogue. It is subversive to the dominant discourses. The characters in the novel, *A Fine Balance* (2006) engage in various forms of resistance to challenge the oppressive system. The text highlights the oppressive system in work where "But, as you well know, things never work that way in this country. The big fish always eat the small ones, and the small fish eat the still smaller ones" (p. 36). It foregrounded the power dynamics in society. It is a society where the wealthy and powerful exploit and oppress the less fortunate. "Power, like a desolating pestilence, pollutes whatever it touches" (p. 140). The weak and the individual have to fight for survival because as Ishvar says "In the jungle, there is only one law: the law of the claw" (p. 244). It tells us the harsh reality of that society where everything is driven by the power and survival of the weak depends on their ability to fight back and resist. As Dina Dalal tries her best to break the confines of the social structure. "What she wanted to do, what she had begun to do, was to go beyond the world of her class, race, religion, beyond all the narrow confines that were bound to destroy her" (p. 401). She struggles to break the societal norms and she tries her best to transcend the limitations imposed by the oppressive social structure. Mistry describes, "The ropes were transferred from their ankles to their necks and the three were hanged. The bodies were displayed in the village square" (p.146). For the



characters, there are only two ways, revolt or perish. They recognize the oppressive power structures and the text shows their determination to resist and challenge it. Dukhi works towards an individual revolution-breaking with lifelong traditions—to apprentice his sons as tailors with Ashraf, “It soon became known in Dukhi’s village that his children were learning a trade other than leather working. In the old days, the punishment for stepping outside one’s caste would have been death. Dukhi was spared his life, but it became a very hard life. He was allowed no more carcasses and had to travel long distances to find work” (p.118).

The text demonstrates the power dynamics and the characters from diverse social backgrounds engage with resistance to the oppressive social order. The text highlights the unequal distribution of power and the corrupting influence of power. The characters effort to subvert and resist the power structure and they seek a just social system where every human being shall be considered equal.

#### 4.5. Carnivalistic Elements

Carnavalesque is characterized by festive events and actions. This festivity can be used as a subversive tool. In the text, we can examine the occasions where different characters are engaged in carnivalesque actions as a form of resistance against the dominant power system. The novel incorporates elements of the carnivalesque to support the power. These moments of collective joy provide a sense of liberation and relief from the oppressive system. It fosters resistance against the prevailing oppressive power structure. “The huts were hives of excitement and enthusiasm, as if the approaching holiday had provided a glimpse of their carefree past, and helped them forget momentarily the harsh realities of everyday life” (Chapter 5). The festive atmosphere gives them temporary liberation from the clutches of the hardships that they experience in their lives. Carnavalesque elements offer a respite. “Every year the thread of hope attached to the festival of colors wore thinner because every year it became more and more of an ordeal for Dina Dalal to maintain the illusion of festivity in her threadbare existence” (Chapter 6).

The festival of colors showcases the significance of communal celebrations and their power of liberation. Despite the oppressive system, the festivity provides an escape to them. Celebratory spirit is associated with the monsoon season. “The whole country was brimming with optimism, as though the monsoons had washed away the drudgery of daily existence and the nation had emerged refreshed and ready to celebrate” (Chapter 7). It seems the landscape is going through a transformation. The rain brings joy and a ray of hope for change and betterment in their desperate lives. Whenever the oppressed gathered for communal festive activities, “They laughed and sang and cracked jokes about one another, and for once the power of the police and landlords was overshadowed by the freedom of the weak” (Chapter 10). It illustrates the subversion of the power structure in the festive activities. This temporary liberation of the marginalized can ignite hope for permeant liberation and freedom from the oppressive system. These carnivalesque elements can reverse the power dynamics. The euphoric mood is described in the novel in these words, “

The students fervently believed their example would inspire universities across the country to undertake radical reforms, which would complement the grassroots movement of Jaya Prakash Narayan that was rousing the nation with a call to: return to Gandhian principles. The changes would invigorate all of society, transform it from a corrupt, moribund creature into a healthy organism that would, with its heritage of a rich and ancient civilization, and the wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads, awaken the world and lead the way towards enlightenment for all humanity (p. 24).

#### 4.6. Various Voices and Perspectives

The story in the novel is presented through multiple narrators. Different characters narrate with shifting perspectives throughout the novel. Each character having unique background brings a unique voice, experience, and viewpoint. For instance, Dina Dala who is a widow and a woman in a patriarchal structure struggles to main her independence and dignity. She is the central voice of the story. Her narrative allows us to take insights into the challenges faced by women in the patriarchal and capitalist society. It also showcases the way she resists oppressive systems. Similarly, Ishvar and Om, tailors from low caste foreground the problems faced by that kind of people under the caste system. They offer us a harsh picture of the social hierarchies that shape their lives. On the other hand, Maneck is a college student and has a more privileged background. It gives us another voice and perspective. The novel is woven around him and exposes the complexities of class differences.

Rohinton Mistry skillfully weaves together these diverse voices and perspectives and creates a multidimensional narrative that provides a comprehensive exploration of the power dynamics within the social fabric of 1970s India.

#### 4.7. The Shaping Power Structures

##### 4.7.1. Socioeconomic Power

It is the central and dominant force in the novel. In the social structure, different characters occupy different positions within this social hierarchy. "Isn't that oy news? She sparkled with joy." Dina nodded, doubtful. 'I thought the court found her guilty of cheating in the election.' "No, no, no!" said Mrs. Gupta. "That is all rubbish, it will be appealed." Now all those troublemakers who accused her falsely have been put in jail. No more strikes and morchas and silly disturbances"(73). The poor and marginalized always face oppression from powerful people who exploit their vulnerability. The landlord who harasses Dina Dalal never appears in person. His power is embodied in the thugs and rent collectors who terrorize the tenants. "Their power manifests as violence when they beat up Ishvar, Omprakash, and Maneck, and vandalize Dina's flat" (p. 524-27). Characters like Dina and Maneck somehow hold better social positions than characters like Ishvar and Omprakash who face economic disadvantages. Their status influences their economic opportunities, and their access to resources.

##### 4.7.2. Caste Power

The caste system is also a form of power structure depicted in the novel. There are untouchable people. Om and Isvar like people face social discrimination and marginalization. The caste system restricts their opportunities and social mobility. For his defiance, Narayan and two other 'Chamars' are forcibly gagged, flogged, and tortured. "Burning coals were held to the three men's genitals, then stuffed into their mouths" (p. 146). The novel brings to life the sordid living conditions of the lower-caste Indians living in rural India. Even the upper caste women are not exempt from oppression. We are told that they resented the birth of two sons to Dukhi. It was hard for them to be resentful, the birth of daughters often brought them beatings from their husbands and their husbands' families. "Sometimes they were ordered to discreetly get rid of the newborn. Then they had no choice but to strangle the infant with her swaddling clothes, poison her, or let her starve to death" (p. 99-100). Their struggle for equality and dignified lives collapses due to the oppressive power wielded by the caste system. It is ironic that pledges of fighting against caste injustice were taken then but are still to be redeemed. The speaker who comes to spread the Mahatma's message says:

What is this disease? you may ask. This disease, brothers and sisters is the notion of untouchability, ravaging us for centuries, denying dignity to our fellow human beings. This disease must be purged from our society, from our hearts, and our minds. No one is untouchable, for we are all children of the same God. Remember what Gandhiji says, that untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisonous milk (p.107).

#### **4.7.3. Gender Power**

The novel also projects gender power dynamics. Manek's mother and Dina Dalal face constraints and discrimination in the patriarchal system. The patriarchal system imposes limitations on their choices and restricts their autonomy. The novel exposes the power imbalance between men and women in society. Women face domestic violence and unfair treatment. Nusswan brother of Dina, therefore, regulates Dina's money, dresses, education, and even friendships. Later this power is used to induce Dina into marriage (pp. 34-35).

Characters like Dinal Dalal resists the power structure. Dina challenges despite her disadvantaged position as a widow, the oppressive patriarchal system. She defies social norms and expectations. She maintains her independence and establishes her own business to support herself after the death of her husband, Rustom. She resists social pressures and exercises her will against eh socioeconomic power and patriarchal system.

Om and Ishvar belong to the lower caste and despite their status, they refuse to accept their passivity and marginalization. They challenge the system by asserting their will and dignity by pursuing their aspirations as tailors. They form a bond of solidarity. They resist the challenge of the oppressive caste system.

Maneck who belongs to a privileged background navigates through the power dynamics by growing empathy and forming a bond of humanity with other characters from different social strata. He also challenges the stereotype and prejudices associated with caste and class. he holds a more inclusive and compassionate perspective.

The characters through the text navigate and challenge power systems and structures by asserting their will, forming bonds, and resisting social norms and constraints. They resist and challenge the system of power. it shows their resilience and determination against oppressive and unjust social systems.

#### **4.8. The interplay of voices and perspectives**

Different voices and different perspectives contribute to the portrayal of power dynamics and resistance by the characters in the novel. You cannot draw lines and compartments. "You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair" (p. 231).

#### **4.9. Representation of Multiple Perspectives**

A diverse range of perspectives and experiences is achieved through multiple voices in the text. The novel explores the lives of different characters from different social backgrounds e.g. castes, gender, or social status. This exposes the power dynamics from different angles. It portrays the challenges faced by the marginalized people in the society. As it is said in the novel, "Just keep connecting patiently, Dinabi, that the secret . . . it all seems meaningless bits and rags till you piece it together" (p.403).

#### 4.10. Shifting Narrative Focus

Through shifting narrative focus, the readers are allowed to experience the minds of different characters throughout the story. In this way, the power dynamics can be viewed from multiple vantage points. The reader gets the opportunity to see inside the minds and observe the thoughts, desires of different characters and how they engage in struggle against the oppressive system. This interplay fosters empathy among the readers.

#### 4.11. Subversion of Dominant Discourses

The novel challenges dominant power systems through the voice of marginalized people who are often silent. "Dina therefore goes and chops off her hair to defy Nusswan"(p.27). Dukhi takes his children away from the village and trains them in a profession not meant for their caste. Maneck refuses to involve himself in the family business until his father acknowledges his opinions. In this way, the novel subverts the hegemonic power. Twenty years pass after independence and nothing changes. Narayan says, "Government passes new laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than animals" (p.142). It explores an unjust society where oppression is a norm. The characters in the novel confront oppressive norms and prejudices. Narayan's father tells his son, "You changed from Chamar to tailor. Be satisfied with that" (p. 143). However, Narayan who is educated wants to exercise his rights. "He wants to vote in the elections and not let the blank ballots be filled by the landlord's men" (p. 144).

#### 4.12. Dialogic Interactions

*A Fine Balance* (2006) holds dialogic interactions between characters. "Emergency has just been declared in the country and the common people have yet to understand the threat to themselves. One man comments: Sounds like one more government tamasha" (p.5). They engage in discussions, debates, and negotiations. It allows the exploration of the power system and dynamics of the power. The novel illustrates characters employing different strategies to challenge power structures. They use dialogues, alliances, and bonds to resist the powers. It helps readers to understand the complexities of power and resistance.

In conclusion, the study aims to explore the complex and intricate dynamics of power and resistance in the novel, *A Fine Balance* (2006) by Rohinton Mistry. We use Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism, power dynamics, polyphony, and heteroglossia to examine the text of the novel. It enhances our understanding of the complexities inherent in the characters' struggle and resistance. They employ different resistance strategies against oppressive power structures. In the next part of the article, we focus on the findings of the study.

### 5. Findings

The findings of this study expose the complex dynamics of power and resistance within the narrative of *A Fine Balance* (2006). The analysis is shaped by Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque. It uncovers various key elements.

#### 5.1. Multi-vocality of Power

The analysis of the text demonstrates that within the narrative, power is multifaceted. It manifests in various forms such as political, economic, and social power. Different characters in the novel experience power differently, some individuals exerting dominance while others negotiate oppressive structures. The dialogic nature of power is evident through the clash of multiple perspectives and the convergence of various voices within the narrative.

### 5.2. Subversive Acts of Resistance

The findings pinpoint the strategies of resistance employed by the characters to challenge the dominant discourses. The characters carve out spaces of agency through acts of defiance, alternative discourse, and subversion. The features of their resistance are resilience and the ability to negotiate power structures.

### 5.3. Negotiation of Identity and Agency

The study showcases the impact of power dynamics on characters' construction of identity and their agency. The characters' sense of self, identity transformation, ambivalence, and fragmentation are influenced by power relations. However, the characters also show agency through their ability to assert their individuality and the act of resistance, even within the restrictive social context.

### 5.4. The fluidity of Power Relationships

The findings of the study show that power relations are not fixed or static within the novel. It evolves as characters navigate and negotiate social hierarchies. Characters in the narrative contest and employ strategies to reconfigure power structures.

### 5.5. Dialogic Spaces of Resistance

The analysis of the text uncovers the dialogic spaces where resistance thrives. There we can see the convergence of multiple voices and discourses. It allows for the exchange of ideas and the formation of collective resistance. The text showcases the moments of communal solidarity and shared agency as characters unite against oppressive hegemonic structures.

The findings emphasize the intricacies of power and resistance within *A Fine Balance* (2006). Social reality is explored and it is discovered that it is multifaceted. Social reality is a ground where power is contested, subverted, and negotiated. The resistance showcases the characters' resilience against oppressive systems. It offers glimpses of hope and agency in the face of oppression and exploitation.

These findings deepen our understanding of the text and it highlights the relevance of the Bakhtinian reading. Bakhtinian concepts are highly relevant in analyzing the power dynamics and acts of resistance in literary works.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study delves into the complex dynamics of power and resistance within Rohinton Mistry's novel. The researchers employed Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism, polyphony, carnivalesque, and heteroglossia. It is found that power and resistance have multifaceted. The study sheds light on the Portrayal of power and the strategies of resistance employed by the characters.

The study discovers that power within the narrative is not monolithic but exists in multiple forms, such as political, economic, and social power. power is dialogic. In the text various voices are convergent. It reflects the complexity of power relations and social dynamics. The researchers expose the presence of subversive acts of resistance. The characters challenge the dominant ideological structures. They also navigate and negotiate their identity and agency amidst power differentials. It shows the characters' ability to navigate through an oppressive system. The power is fluid and it is subjected to contestation and reconfiguration. The narrative explores the importance of collective actions, shared agency, and festivity as moments of liberation and freedom.

The present study is a vital contribution to the existing scholarship on power relations and strategies of resistance. The study examined through the lens of Bakhtinian theory, power dynamics, and strategies of resistance in *A Fine Balance* (2006). The study deepens the understanding of the intricacies and complexities inherent in power relations. The individuals in the text employed strategies to resist and assert their agency. It also foregrounds that the Bakhtinian readings are applicable for literary analysis and the portrayal of power relations by dialogic interplay within the text.

The research work highlights the significance of examining and exploring power and resistance within literature and the potential for the dialogic study to show insights into the intricacies and complexities of human experience. The study uncovers the dialogical interplay of power and resistance in the story. It also contributes to a wider understanding of power relations, social inequality, resilience, and the transformative potential of collective action against oppressive structures. This research effort further invites future researchers the exploration of the complex dynamics of power and acts of resistance in literary works and their relevance to our deep and wider understanding of societal dynamics.

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