

# Treatment of Human - Nature Relationship in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

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## ABSTRACT

**Man is a social animal. He lives in social group. He is the unique creation of nature. There exists a strong relationship between human and nature. Without the benefits of nature, human cannot live in this world. Everyone has a kind of relationship with one's own native place according to one's geographical, environmental, and social atmosphere. They are interrelated biologically, psychologically, and ecologically. There is ethnic bond between the two. So he is related to his birthplace in the cultural, primitive ritual, and racial aspects. This bond is strong in the unconscious of the human which is his primitive trait. Rohinton Mistry is an eminent Indian English writer. He through his works has portrayed all the sides of Human. This study analyzes the novel *A Fine Balance* to bring out human-nature relationship.**

**Key Words:** *Human, Nature, Environment, Society, Modernization, Deforestation and Preservation.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Rohinton Mistry (1952- ) is an outstanding Indian Fiction writer writing in English. His novels are the typical representations of the present Indian social milieu. He delineates all the aspects of human life with its micro details in his novels. Environment is one of the most requisite factors to human for his survival in the world. He has written an anthology of short stories and four novels so far namely *Tales from Firozha Baag* (1987), *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), *Family Matters* (2002) and *The Scream* (2008). (Dodiya 9) This study aims at an analysis of the novel *A Fine Balance* so as to bring out Rohinton Mistry's treatment of human-nature relationship in it.

Human is a social being. He is profoundly attached to his social scenario, natural environment, native culture, tradition and so on. Human and his natural environment are inseparable. The humanity's increasing interest in other fields and the complexity of life in the contemporary societies are distinct from nature. But still they depend on nature to survive. Human-nature relationship seems disproportionate to those vulnerable groups in the society. Nowadays there is lack of green spaces and good air quality in the habitations. According to Environmentalism, human-nature relationship has been explored through various human related activities such as exploitation of the natural resource and environmental hazards. (Ratna 194)

Some aspects of power are reflected in literatures which focus on environment. They are agricultural engineering, extinction of animals by hunting, ecological collapse due to human exploitation of natural resources. These aspects are all against the power of nature. Here created a conflict between the power of nature and the power of human. The former is destroyed in many ways by the latter. Due to that, the latter suffers a lot for his survival as the former is the rudimentary source for everything in the latter's life. He depends on the natural world in each aspect of his existence on this earth. Human is the cause of the destruction and so he becomes the victim of the disorder which he has created.

Eco-literature is closely akin to any literary writer. There is no possibility to produce literature without delineating the environmental scenario of the concerned society. Here Rohinton Mistry is not an exception from the concept discussed in the current research paper. No doubt, he is the lover of the virgin nature. He deeply regrets for the exploitation of the purity of nature in the past few decades and so he criticizes the loss in some of his novels with heavy burden in his heart.

In *A Fine Balance*, Rohinton Mistry has introduced four major characters. They are Dina Dalal, Eswar, Om Prakash, and Maneck Kohlah. Belonging sense or longing for nativity is a common trait to any human. That natural thing happens in the life of the characters Eswar, Om Prakash, and Maneck Kohlah, when they are pushed to dwell

in an alien land. The new land has a busy cosmopolitan city atmosphere. So they are not acquainted with such a life style and they are familiar with peaceful country life in the beauty of natural background. The inconvenience is crucial especially in the life of Maneck who belongs to the Himalayan hillside. (Ansari, 180)

Maneck Kohlah is introduced as a young man who has left his family home in a mountain side village to study refrigeration and air-conditioning. His father Farokh Kohlah runs a general grocery shop and sells soft drink, Kohlah's Cola. Maneck is not interested to leave the village for his study. They have had a heart-melting and eyes-filling beautiful location in their surroundings. Farokh Kohlah has been keenly attached to the beautiful, mist-covered, natural cover of mountains. His mind is always filled with the fine sights of the locale. So he is contented with his life amidst nature. He and his natural surroundings are inseparable. He is one with all the aspects of nature. He gets comfort from nature whenever he walks with disturbed mind. So nature provides him peace and fulfils his needs. But, suddenly, the peace is disturbed by the destruction of the mountains. Farokh is very much fond of the mountains and he enjoys walking on the hillside:

He must have walked about three miles when the light of day turned towards the promise of sunset. Strains of pink and orange were weaving their ephemeral threads through the sky. He stopped to gaze west wards, eager to savour the moment. At times like these he wished for two eyes again, to get a wider sweep of the landscape. (Mistry 216)

But those mountains begin to suffer due to deforestation. Broad modern roads are laid and skyscraper buildings are constructed by violating the laws of nature. (Sunwani 112) Rohinton Mistry has vividly pictured the situation:

But the road continued to inch upwards, swallowing everything in its path. The sides of their beautiful hills were becoming gashed and scarred. From high on the slopes, the advancing tracks looked like rivers of mud defying gravity, as through nature had gone mad. The distant thunder of blasting and the roar of earth-moving machines floated up early in the morning, and the dreaminess of the dawn mist turned to nightmare. (Mistry 213)

Then onwards the family misses the fresh air and the beauty of nature. In this way, not only the Farokhs but also all the residents of the hill station face such disturbances and losses in the midst of their calm life. Further, Farokh is terribly disturbed by the mechanical invasion of the heartland of nature. He regrets a lot for his inability to preserve the beautiful nature in the hills. The forests are devoured for firewood. It makes the scarcity of rain. The snow cover turns diminishing gradually due to heavy sun light. So "the lighter the snow cover, the heavier was Kohlah's heart" (Mistry 215).

When he looks down the hills, he has felt that he lost something. The emotion was exposed in words: "Waves of anger, compassion, disgust, sorrow, failure, betrayal, love-surged and crashed baltering and confusing him. For What? Of Whom? And Why was it?" (Mistry 216) He feels sad and weeps helplessly and silently. He feels for the loss of his identity and his birthplace. Here Rohinton Mistry has adeptly revealed the sad plight of Mr. Kohlah and his family:

Mr. Kohlah watched helplessly as the asphaltting began, changing the brown rivers into black, completing the transmutation of his beloved birthplace where his forefathers had lived as in paradise. He watched powerlessly while, for the second time, lines on paper ruined the life of the Kohlah family. Only this time it was an indigenous surveyor's cartogram, not a foreigner's imperial map. (Mistry 214)

The place has lost its identity due to the invasion of politicians for the growth of industries, trade and commerce. The place, Keycee becomes dull in these days because of the destruction of the natural location and the modernization in the neighborhood. This is evident in the words of Rohinton Mistry that the wonderful sight of the place is utterly spoiled by the Engineers' establishment of the artificial atrocities:

But the day soon came when the mountains began to leave them. It started with roads. Engineers in sola top are arrived with their sinister instruments and charted their designs on reams of paper. These were to be modern roads, they promised, roads that would hum with the swift passage of modern traffic. Roads, wide and heavy-duty to replace scenic mountain paths too narrow for the broad vision of nation-builders and World Bank officials. (Mistry 213)

The business of Farokh also is affected and the family struggle to continue the business. All these things have affected Farokh Kohlah and his family very much. Moreover, the young man Maneck and his family also have experienced the losses of their birthplace owing to the political crises prevailing in the nation. As they reside in the Himalayan hillside, they undergo problems due to the partition at first. Once, Farokh Kohlah was a very wealthy man. He owned the fields of grain and orchards of apple and peach. He got a huge income from the lands. The bad time started when the partition of the country began.

A borderline was drawn between the two countries: India and Pakistan. In that border, all Farokh's fields were gone to the other side i.e. Pakistan. So he suffered a lot for a long time to recover from such a huge loss:

“A foreigner draws a magic line on a map and called it the new border it became a river of blood upon the earth. And the orchards, fields, factories, businesses, all on the wrong side of that line, vanished with a wave of the pale conjuror's wand” (Mistry 203).

That was the first heavy loss and disturbance in the life of Farokh's family. Being the sincere caretaker of nature, the loss of the natural orchards has created great grief in him: “The real income had come from those other, lost, sources. Now it needed to be nurtured for all it was worth” (Mistry 203). Thereafter, he has had a dream to improve his family. The destruction of the mountains and the deforestation has become the second loss to Farokh and his family. Rohinton Mistry has effectively portrayed the present condition of human-nature relationship.

Eight years later, Maneck Kohlah returns from the Gulf country to attend the funeral of his father Farokh Kohlah. After the cremation, Maneck and his mother scatter the ashes of his father in the mountainside in accordance with his last wish:

The air was calm this morning. There was no breeze to help disperse the ashes. Meneck and his mother took turns dipping into the box and sprinkling the grey powder. She ventured into more difficult places, trying to throw a fistful in a hesitant waterfall, mingle some in an inaccessible clump of wild flowers, spread a little around a tree that grow out of an overhang. (Mistry 518)

This shows the relationship of Farokh with nature how he has attached with nature in his life time and dedicated his life for nature by death. The attachment is pure and genuine. Even after his death, his ashes continue to stay there and mingle with the nature. Filled with his father's memories, he remembers his father's fondness and his relationship with the beautiful natural surroundings. Tears roll down on his cheeks. His father's ashes are spread every nook and corner of the forest and all over the mountain. He thinks that his father is living there everywhere. He is inseparable from that lovely place which he has loved so deeply. He will be there at every particle of dust and air. With that heavy thought, he agonizes for the great loss of the environment and his father.

### CONCLUSION

Every human is the creation of nature. He is the part of the universe. Consequently, there is firm affinity between the creation and the creator. Human has to maintain this valuable bridge properly. If anyone of these begins to exercise the power over other, there would be a heavy loss to the human. Man should not violate the laws of nature. It is his duty to preserve it for the goodness of the universe.

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