

Impact of Urban Migration on Caste: Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance and Rural-to-Urban Caste Migration in India

Authors : Mohua Dutta

Abstract : The primary aim of this research paper is to investigate the forced urban migration of Dalits in India who are fleeing caste persecution in rural areas. This paper examines the relationship between caste and rural-to-urban internal migration in India using a literary text, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, highlighting the challenges faced by Dalits in rural areas that force them to migrate to urban areas. Despite the prevalence of such discussions in Dalit autobiographies written in vernacular languages, there is a lack of discussion regarding caste migration in Indian English Literature, including this present text, as evidenced by the existing critical interpretations of the novel, which this paper seeks to rectify. The primary research question is how urban migration affects caste system in India and why rural-to-urban caste migration occurs. The purpose of this paper is to better understand the reasons for Dalit migration, the challenges they face in rural and urban areas, and the lingering influence of caste in both rural and urban areas. The study reveals that the promise of mobility and emancipation provided by class operations drives rural-to-urban caste migration in India, but it also reveals that caste marginalization in rural areas is closely linked to class marginalization and other forms of subalternity in urban areas. Moreover, the caste system persists in urban areas as well, making Dalit migrants more vulnerable to social, political, and economic discrimination. The reason for this is that, despite changes in profession and urban migration, the trapped structure of caste capital and family networks exposes migrants to caste and class oppressions. To reach its conclusion, this study employs a variety of methodologies. Discourse analysis is used to investigate the current debates and narratives surrounding caste migration. Critical race theory, specifically intersectional theory and social constructivism, aids in comprehending the complexities of caste, class, and migration. Mistry's novel is subjected to textual analysis in order to identify and interpret references to caste migration. Secondary data, such as theoretical understanding of the caste system in operation and scholarly works on caste migration, are also used to support and strengthen the findings and arguments presented in the paper. The study concludes that rural-to-urban caste migration in India is primarily motivated by the promise of socioeconomic mobility and emancipation offered by urban spaces. However, the caste system persists in urban areas, resulting in the continued marginalisation and discrimination of Dalit migrants. The study also highlights the limitations of urban migration in providing true emancipation for Dalit migrants, as they remain trapped within caste and family network structures. Overall, the study raises awareness of the complexities surrounding caste migration and its impact on the lives of India's marginalised communities. This study contributes to the field of Migration Studies by shedding light on an often-overlooked issue: Dalit migration. It challenges existing literary critical interpretations by emphasising the significance of caste migration in Indian English Literature. The study also emphasises the interconnectedness of caste and class, broadening understanding of how these systems function in both rural and urban areas.

Keywords : rural-to-urban caste migration in india, internal migration in india, caste system in india, dalit movement in india, rooster coop of caste and class, urban poor as subalterns

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