I. Introduction: Balancing Memory and History in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

This study is based on Rohinton Mistrys *A Fine Balance* (1996), which focuses on the relation between memory and history. It studies the issues such as identity, untouchability, marginalization, and resistance. In order to deal with these issues, this study adopts the argument of Allan Megill in which he argues, "Memory is valorized when identity is threatened" (40). For him, the intensity of memory increases profusely in the moments of crisis. Agreeing his argument, Duncan Bell observes:

> As identities are challenged, undermined and possibly shattered, so memories are drawn on and reshaped to defend unity and coherence, to shore up a sense of self and community. (6)

Here, Bell's argument applies to Mistry's *A Fine Balance* as he depicts characters from several sections of India – rural as well as urban. Characters are from Parsi community – Dina Dalal, Maneck Kohlah; Muslim community – Ashraf Chacha, Mumtaz, Hindu community – Thakur Dharamsi, an upper-caste Brahmin and the Chamaars such as Dukhi Mochi, Roopa, Radha, Narayan, Ishvar, and Omprakash. All of these characters' identities are challenged for which their memories get the chance to take their shapes except Thakur Dharamsi who is the perpetrator of cruelties on the lives of the untouchables. For instance, in *A Fine Balance*, the question of identity can be seen in the memory of Dukhi Mochi. When Dukhi's son, Ishvar's cheek is hurt by the horns of a dead buffalo while working with his father, Roopa becomes angry with her husband. She rebukes her husband and tells him that he would have waited till the boy becomes older. Dukhi remembers his childhood and replies, "He is seven. My father took me at five" (103). By here, it becomes easy to understand that Dukhi seeks

for his Mochi identity so he wants his son to adopt the same occupation as his. At a later stage, as he is severely thrashed by Thakurji, a kind of resistance can be seen in his language in which he utters, "I spit in their upper-caste faces. I don't need their miserable jobs from now on" (105). Thus, Mistry combines the issue of identity, untouchability, and resistance in such a way that all of these are embedded very tightly within the same narration.

Regarding the relationship between memory and resistance, Jenny Edkins believes that "the memory of catastrophic events provides specific openings for resistance to centralized political power" (101). Mistry, in his *A Fine Balance*, provides the memory of the Indira Gandhi's State-of-Internal Emergency and the resistance shown towards it by the common people; he remembers and narrates:

> The advertisements had been replaced by the Prime Minister's picture, proclaiming: "Iron Will! Hard Work! These will sustain us!" It was a quintessential specimen of the face that was proliferating on posters throughout the city. Her cheeks were executed in the lurid pink of cinema billboards. Other aspects of the portrait had suffered greater infelicities.

Here, the historical memory of the Emergency has been depicted from authorial eyes. The way the Prime Minister wants to increase her influence among the common people is judged in a negative mode by the author. Moreover, when Ishvar looks at the posters he utters, "Look at it, Om. She is making the sour-lime face, just like yours when you are upset" (181). Although Ishvar's utterance cannot be considered as a powerful resistance, he resists to the Emergency and its atrocities – such as the destruction of slums through beautification program; the sterilization of the youths through Family Planning Program; and the killing of the students like Avinash – in a

silent mode. Ishvar is not able to resist the authority powerfully from his personal level.

Mistry's character Rajaram memorizes the historical event of the notorious Emergency by calculating from his own side. He predicts that the enemies of the Prime Minister have increased in such a way that there will be no places in the jails to keep the prisoners. As people from each and every corner of Indian society are against of the atrocities of the Emergency, Rajaram believes that the number of enemies will increase rapidly. His memory of the effect of the Emergency is narrated by Mistry in this way:

> Maybe they had no choice. From what I hear, the jails are full with the Prime Minister's enemies – union workers, newspaper people, teachers, students. So may be there is no room in the prisons. (182)

Here, the memory of the character, Rajaram and the reality of the Emergency are embedded in such a way that Mistry's balancing of memory and history can be realized in the same narrative. Mistry is unwilling to consider the historical facts only in order to make a new history by considering the value of his own memory of the Emergency and his characters' memories. Thus, this study focuses on the embeddedness of memory and history that is maintained in a balanced manner in Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. Many critics have focused on Mistry's reliance on historical-political dimension in his novel, however, I consider the involvement of memory in his narrative. One of the critics having this attitude is K. Ratna Sheila Mani who believes that Mistry has covered the historical moment from the country's Partition in 1947 to the assassination of the Prime Minister in 1984. What I appreciate of Ratna Mani is her focus on Mistry's interweaving of national history in association with the

personal lives of the protagonists. This study stresses on the personal lives of the protagonists along the line of their memories.

Along with the history and memory of the Emergency under Indira Gandhi's rule, this study emphasizes on the historical memory of the Partition such that a new pluralist history can be created out of the author's and his characters' memories. Remembering the events of the Partition, Mistry narrates:

> Dukhi, too, was disappointed, but accepted the decision as being for the best. Disturbing things were happening around them. Strangers . . . had been visiting the district. They brought with them stories of Muslims attacking Hindus in many parts of the country. "We must get ready to defend ourselves," they said. "And also to avenge ourselves. If they spill the blood of our Hindu brothers, this country shall run red with rivers of Muslim blood." (122)

Here, the historical moment of Partition has been remembered by the author in order to fill up the gaps of national history. India's national historiographers have excluded the memories of the Partition victims considering memories as lowly things to be included in history for they are unreliable. However, this study focuses on Mistry's reliance on the imagination and memory of his characters and his own. In order to weave the history of Partition, Mistry relies on imagination and memory of Dukhi Mochi's critical time during the notorious Partition violence. There are untouchables like Dukhi Mochi in India, who are excluded and marginalized from the national history.

Furthermore, in order to show the relationship between memory and history and also how Mistry has maintained the balance between them, it is fruitful to focus on their definitions. Defining memory in his own way Duncan Bell, in his essay

"Introduction: Memory, Trauma and World Politics," opines: "Memory is the mental faculty by which we preserve or recover our pasts, and also the events recovered" (26). More than this, Bell also believes, "Without that link – now reaching back to then – you may have the image of the past in your mind, but it isn't memory but something else, a social construction, history" (26). By here, what we come to understand is that although there is difference between memory and history, they are interrelated and a total detachment may make history incomplete. Therefore, this study focuses on Mistry's reliance on his as well as his characters' memories in order to create a new critical history out of his novel.

Regarding the plurality of the past and the definition of history, Duncan Bell once again defines history in his own way. In doing so, he maintains that there lies difference between history and critical history:

> History is the infinitely complex past out of which these mythological narratives are hewn, and critical history, whilst always aware of the dangers of nationalist glorification and accommodation, stresses the contingency, opacity, and plurality of the past. (27)

As Indian history covers only the glorification and accommodation of the national authority, it lacks the details of the plurality of the past. In Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, the author has the project to make a new critical history thereby maintaining plurality of the Indian past giving space to the balance of memory and history. His project of creating a pluralist critical history covers the memory and history of caste violence (covering untouchability); the memory and history of Partition violence (covering Hindu-Muslim riots); and the memory and history of the Emergency under Indira Gandhi's regime. To exemplify Mistry's reliance on memory and history of caste violence, it is customary to interpret Narayan's promise to his father two years ago

that this time he will cast his vote by his own decision. While he is standing on a queue, he remembers his childhood. He had been punished by the school teacher as he and Ishvar entered a Brahmin school. Mistry narrates Narayan's memory in this manner:

> Narayan had not forgotten his promise to his father two years ago. He went off alone to vote that morning. The turnout was poor. A ragged queue meandered by the door of the school house set up as the polling station. Inside, the smell of chalk dust and stale food made him remember the day when he was a small boy, when he and Ishvar had been beaten by the teacher for touching the slates and books of upper-caste children. (145)

Depicting this memory of Narayan, Mistry tries to sympathize with the circumstance of the untouchables of Indian villages. All of the time since many generations, the untouchables have been tortured mercilessly depriving them of their identity; they are discriminated by the upper castes and, at the same time, marginalized by the national authority considering them as lowly creatures. Mistry might have seen this sort of discrimination and caste violence by his own eyes during his staying in India despite the fact that he writes this novel from a distant land, Canada. This study also encompasses Mistry's reliance on the memory and history of Partition violence although the novel has depicted a brief detail about it. For instance, Mistry depicts the effects of the Hindu-Muslim riots and their news spreading all over India. Mistry narrates: "But the stories kept multiplying: someone had been knifed in the bazaar in town; a sadhu hacked to death at the bus station; a settlement razed to the ground" (123). These are just some of the cruelties narrated by the author. The national history of India gives these cruelties the value of numbers and statistics according to

Meenakshie Verma, the author of *Aftermath: An Oral History*. It gives us the sense that the historiographers suffer the severe fever of exclusionary politics which is looked at critically by Mistry through his novel.

Similarly, Mistry's reliance on the memory and history of the notorious Emergency under Indira Gandhi's regime in the 1970s has covered a vast area of the novel. This study focuses on how Mistry has played with facts and fiction in order to show a fine balance between memory and history by giving emphasis on his memory, imagination, and his characters' memories so that he can sympathize with the problems of the marginalized people of India living in a foreign country. To exemplify the depiction of the memory and history of the Emergency, Mistry narrates:

> On campus, a new group, Students For Democracy, which had surfaced soon after declaration of the Emergency, was now in the ascendant. Its sister organization, Students Against Fascism, maintained the integrity of both groups by silencing those who spoke against them or criticized the Emergency. Threats and assaults became so common place, they might have been part of the university curriculum. (246)

Here, Mistry is aware of the fact that either "Students for Democracy" or "Students Against Fascism," each stands for cruelty and a helping-hand of the government. The motive of the authority to suppress the democratic teachers and students enables the Emergency to hide its atrocious ruling inside the cloak of democracy; likewise, the names of the students' union are coined which is a greater deception to the common people. Mistry's motive behind depicting this narrative is to criticize the Emergency so that he can associate himself with the common people – here in this case, the students and teachers who are resisting to the Emergency. This study has adopted Guy

Lawson's belief on history in which he argues, "Mistry and Dickens are interested in those to whom history happens" (22). For all of the protagonists – Dina, Maneck, Avinash, Ishvar, and Omprakash – history happens to them. They cannot come outside the clutch of history, their circumstances are beyond their control; yet, a mode of silent resistance can be seen within them.

The main significance of this study is to understand Mistry's *A Fine Balance* as a novel consisting of historical memory. It also explores the relationship between memory and history basing on Mistry's reliance on his own memories and imaginations and his characters' memories. This study establishes the issue of identity, untouchability, marginalization, and resistance by deploying the importance of memory in creating a new history, that is, a critical pluralist history. Moreover, it also helps us to understand the status of the Parsis, Chamaars (untouchables), Muslims, beggars, poors, etc. of the rural and urban India.

More than this, it also helps us to understand the impacts and effects of the cruelties of the national authority, for example, the impacts of the Emergency, the impacts of the caste violence, and the impacts of the Partition violence (Hindu-Muslim riots and population transference). This study, at the same time, gives focus on author's position and states that Mistry is aware of the political turmoils ongoing in contemporary India directing his authorial sympathy to the marginalized people of India through his characterization covering the overall problems of the downtrodden people. However, this study does not suggest that Mistry has created an all-inclusive history. This study rests on the assumption that Mistry has created a partial history basing on memory of the sidelined and subdued communities of India thereby filling up the gaps of the national history and historiographers.

The design of this study is based on the division of the entire study into four consecutive chapters. The first chapter "Introduction: Balancing Memory and History in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*," deals with the relationship between memory and history. It covers the study of the historical memory of the caste violence; the historical memory of Partition violence; and the historical memory of the Emergency of the 1970s under Indira Gandhi's notorious regime. It tries to show how Mistry has maintained a balance between memory and history in *A Fine Balance* thereby analyzing the personal memories of the characters as well as the author's individual memories of the history of India.

The second chapter of this study "History and Novelistic Discourse in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*," deals with the historical events of the entire history of India covering the history of caste violence (untouchability); the history of Partition violence; the history of the State-of-Internal Emergency declared under Indira Gandhi's notorious regime. It is one of the core parts of the study and basic focus is laid on the historical, social, political, and cultural differences of Indian society. It also deals with how Mistry endeavors to create an anarchic pluralist history thereby creating a new history. Dealing with the Mistry's project of creating a different history of the downtrodden people of India, this chapter establishes Mistry's endeavor to sympathize with the problems of the marginalized sections of Indian society.

The third chapter of this study "Memory and the Language of Resistance in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance,"* deals with the memory of the caste violence prevailing in Indian society deep-rootedly; the memory of the bygone traumatic Partition violence; and the memory of the atrocities perpetrated by the Emergency under the authoritative regime of Indira Gandhi in the 1970s India. It also deals with

the relationship between memory and resistance and how the individual memories of the characters intersect with the author's personal memories. Moreover, it also deals with the impact of memory on an individual's life. It establishes the fact that the resistances arising from the characters' memories are embedded within the personal memories of the author.

Finally, the fourth chapter "Conclusion," concludes the entire study thereby establishing the fact that Mistry's *A Fine Balance* is the example of a historical memory of India. It also deals with the impact of memory for a historian in order to create a new history. It also brings up the conclusion that national history is to be revisited, revised, and reshaped just as Mistry has done in *A Fine Balance*. A pluralist history can be enriched by including memories of the common people.

II. History and Novelistic Discourse in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

Rohinton Mistry's epic novel, *A Fine Balance*, which is set in the mid 1970s, narrates the story of four unlucky characters. They are forced to live together during a time of political turmoil. With the declaration of "State of Internal Emergency," these characters' circumstances and their fates tend to become inextricably linked in such a way that no one could have predicted. *A Fine Balance* can be interpreted at two different levels: social as well as political and historical point of view. In other words, Mistry critiques the national historiography; he calls for more egalitarian society that goes beyond casteism and creed. In doing so, Mistry challenges the existing national history thereby creating an anarchist pluralist critical history which tends to become an alternative history allowing the marginalized voices to bloom in a full-fledged manner depending himself on the importance of the relationship between memory and history.

In the novel, there are two characters who originally belong to the Chamaar caste of tanners and leather workers. Dukhi Mochi, the father of Ishvar and Narayan, lives in a small village. When his sons become the age of ten and twelve, Dukhi Mochi sends them to the nearby town to be apprenticed as tailors. His courage of transforming his sons to a different job diverting from their own caste becomes the talk of the town. The people of the town refer that Dukhi dares to break the timeless chain of caste. Actually, this is against the high-caste people who would not like at all. To weave the story, Mistry narrates:

> Dukhi Mochi's decision to turn to his sons into tailors was indeed courageous, considering that the prime of his own life had been spent in obedient compliance with the traditions of the caste system. Like his

> forefathers before him, he had accepted from childhood the occupation preordained for his present incarnation. (95)

The wish of Dukhi and his wife Roopa is that their sons Narayan and Ishvar should not follow the caste-based occupation. Ashraf, a Muslim tailor, agrees to teach the skill of tailoring to both of the brothers as Dukhi is his close friend. Dukhi's sons are warmly welcomed by Ashraf and his wife Mumtaz. At this juncture, it seems, Mistry is emphasizing on the fact how difficult it is to fight against the deep-rooted caste-system in Indian society. Although crossing the boundary is quite difficult in caste-system, it is gradually diminishing from India's land due to its unforgettable cruelties. Crossing the boundary of caste-system, at the same time, indicates a kind of resistance to as well as an inclusion in the national historiography. This is because, at least, the issue of caste and identity is taken into account in the national history of India. The notorious caste-system can be overpowered by forming an inter-religious solidarity just as Mistry has depicted the friendship between Dukhi Mochi and his constant companion Ashraf, a Muslim. Thus, Mistry hopes for dismantling the caste-system of India by forming inter-religious solidarity such that untouchability remains no more.

Mistry, in order to emphasize the history of Partition, narrates the events of riots going on among the Hindus and the Muslims throughout India. In the name of seeking safety during the time of religious turmoil, Mistry's characters develop different strategies to avoid the bad impact of the ongoing riots. To take an example from the novel, the signboard of Ashraf's shop Muzaffar Tailoring Company is replaced by another signboard Krishna Tailors such that the shop can be saved from the attack of the Hindu agitators. A group of twenty to thirty agitators come to Ashraf's shop one day getting the information that it is a Muslim shop. Ishvar and Narayan are compelled to drop their pyjamas as the agitators doubt their religious

identity. As the leader of the group finds that the foreskins of both the brothers are intact, the men, that is, the Hindus leave Ashraf's shop immediately.

In this way, Ashraf's family is saved by Ishvar and Narayan for which Mumtaz touches their feet considering them as her family's saviors. At the same time, as Ashraf treats his sons irrespective of community differences, that is, Hindu-Muslim, Dukhi appreciates his Muslim friend, Ashraf. Here, the remarkable fact is that Dukhi being a Hindu is not treated well by other upper-caste Hindus such as Thakur Dharamsi and the schoolmaster who thrashed Ishvar and Narayan earlier as they entered in the Hindu classroom. Although Dukhi and Ashraf follow different religions and represent different communities, they do have an intimate relationship and the common element of humanity creates a sort of never-failing emotional tie between them. Here, Mistry looks at the things from his Parsi eyes.

As in Indian History those who resist the caste violences perpetrated by the upper-castes get severe punishment, Mistry narrates the story of Narayan's resistance in order to seek voting right in the state assembly. He wants to caste his vote for a candidate of his choice. This makes Thakur Dharamsi very furious for which Narayan along with other two men are taken to his farm for punishment. Mistry depicts the atrocity of Thakur Dharamsi which is also the reality of Indian society. At the farm Narayan and his friends are flogged mercilessly as they hang naked by their ankles from the branches of banyan tree. Besides this, Thakur's men, showing a brutal inhumanity, urinate on the inverted faces and burning coals are held up to the three men's genitals after the ballot boxes are taken away in the evening. They scream for many times and, at last, their silent bodies are taken down from the tree thinking they are dead.

But Thakur's men can realize that they are still alive as their bodies begin to stir. Finally, they are hanged and their dead bodies are displayed in the village-square. This is done so that others may learn a lesson that going against of the upper-caste's system can bring a misfortune in the life of lower-caste people. Thakur Dharamsi's *goondas* start harassing the people of the untouchable quarter after they become free from their election duties. Mistry narrates the tyranny of Thakur Dharamsi's men in this way:

> They beat up individuals at random in the streets, stripped some women, raped others, burned a few huts. News of the rampage soon spread. People hid, waiting for the storm of blow over. (146)

Indian society's atrocity is looked at microscopically by Mistry in *A Fine Balance*. As Dukhi Mochi has transformed the cobblers into tailors distorting the society's timeless balance, Thakur Dharamsi is revengeful of him. He thinks that the crossing of the line of caste is a sort of serious offence. It becomes the duty of the upper-caste people to punish such lower-caste people with utmost severity.

Moreover, the incident of atrocity reaches the climax when Dukhi, Roopa, and their daughter are bound and dragged into the main room mercilessly. The body of Narayan is brought in front of them in order to make them identify his face. The extreme cruelty of Thakur Dharamsi and his men is traumatic. In this regard, Mistry narrates:

> The light tore away the benevolent cloak of darkness. The naked corpse's face was a burnt and broken blur. Only by the red birthmark on his chest could they recognize Narayan. A long howl broke from Radha. But the sound of grief soon mingled with the family's death agony; the house was set alight. The first flames licked at the bound

> flesh. The dry winds, furiously fanning the fire, showed the only spark of mercy during this night. The blaze swiftly enfolded all six of them. (147)

No one can forget this sort of cruelty and due to the lack of proper moaning and burial, it may remain in the memory of the victims culminating to a sort of resistance in the days ahead. *A Fine Balance* depicts such cruelties from various corners of Indian society. When Ishvar and Omprakash hear the news in town, the dead bodies of their family members are dispersed into the river. As they go to the Police Station to register an F.I.R. their case is taken very lightly. The police-inspector reluctantly visits to the spot of incident to verify the allegation in the F.I.R. He also reports that nothing is found against Thakur Dharamsi and his men to support charges of arson and murder. The sub-inspector warns Ishvar:

> What kind of rascality is this? Trying to fill up the F.I.R. with lies? You filthy achoot castes are always out to make trouble! Get out before we charge you with public mischief! (148)

Mistry, though a Parsi, is totally concerned with such discrimination adhered in Indian society. When police takes the side of criminal disregarding the actual case, the victims are doubly victimized. In such a circumstance, Mumtaz and Ashraf Chacha finds no words to console Ishvar and Omprakash. Are the untouchables destined to face such an immense injustice? These victims are unable to get help from the government authority. The conflict between the upper-caste and the untouchable is a kind of concrete reality in India; Mistry is aware of this fact and observes Indian society minutely regarding caste violences. The national history avoids these sort of incidents.

On the other hand, there is the existence of enmity between the untouchable and the upper-caste. In the novel, despite the community differences, Ashraf Chacha, Mumtaz, Ishvar, and Omprakash, live like a single family. Here, Mistry picturizes enmity between Hindus, that is, the Thakurs and the Chamaars; however, there is friendship between the Chamaars and the Muslims. This clarifies that Mistry wants indirectly to convey a message to the entire mankind focusing on the fact that ideal human relationship should be above all the concepts of caste, creed, and color. National historiography of India, according to Mistry, is to be re-narrated in order to emphasize justice to the marginalized untouchables.

A Fine Balance narrates the story of social, political, and historical development of India between the year of 1975 and 1985. With the declaration of State-of-Internal Emergency during the rule of Indira Gandhi, the lives of common people prove to be fatal for they are compelled to suffer from exploitation, discrimination, and marginalization. Mistry depicts the reflection of an overall view of socio-cultural problems of contemporary Indian society and Indian politics. In this regard, K. Ratna Shiela Mani observes:

> The political-historical dimension of the novel is also obvious. The novel is a saga that spans the momentous events of India's history from the turbulent times of the country's partition in 1947, to the macabre aftermath of the Prime Minister's assassination in 1984. However, *A Fine Balance* is not merely a political novel. Mistry succeeds in interweaving national history with the personal lives of the protagonist. (194-195).

Mistry collects the historical events that span from the aftermath of Partition via the period of Internal Emergency under Indira Gandhi's rule to her assassination. The

chronology of Indian history is not distorted although Mistry has adopted the narrative technique of flashback throughout the novel. The effect of Emergency intrudes into the lives of Dina Dalal, Maneck Kohlah, Ishvar, and Omprakash resulting to their eventual loss and destruction, that is, their lives lead to a total failure. To take an example, Dina Dalal ultimately loses her prized independence and is compelled to seek shelter in the patriarchal protection of her brother, Nusswan. Omprakash is victimized by making an eunach out of him which is an act symbolic of the impotency of the general populace of India during the authoritative regime of Indira's Emergency. The impact of the Emergency to the life of Ishvar is that he is crippled by the loss of both his legs and is reduced to begging for a living. The fate of Maneck Kohlah, the boy from the Himalayas, is that he throws himself in front of a moving train – he commits suicide. On the other hand, his friend, Avinash is found dead on the railway tracks due to his resistance to the Emergency.

The overall scenario of the novel itself is too grim. To some extent, if the novel has to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair, the end of the novel forfeits that balance as it is depicted with loss and destruction. Thus, Mistry, although living in Canada, has the sound knowledge of India's history which is reflected profusely in *A Fine Balance*. In actuality, the effort of writing a novel about one's native country on the basis of memory has been an irresistible challenge. This is, at the same time, a compelling necessity for a number of immigrant writers who have been compelled to cut off from their community or ethnic roots.

Mistry's *A Fine Balance,* according to Shashi Tharoor, is considered as a significant landmark in the recent Indian Fiction in English, presenting a "stark and moving portrait of life during the Emergency" (169). The design of the story is quite simple and covers a period of about forty years of free India. Throughout the novel

with its opening chapter, "Prologue: 1975" and the concluding one, "Epilogue: 1995," there is the revelation of social and historical developments of India. Any reader feels easy to identify the "city by the sea" as Bombay/Mumbai despite the fact that it is nowhere stated by this name in the novel.

Mistry weaves a subtle and compelling narrative about four unlikely characters who come to live together in the city after the declaration of State-of-Internal Emergency. All of these characters aspire for different pursuits and their fates bring them to "sail under one flag" – this phrase is the title of one of the chapters of the novel. Dina Dalal, a beautiful widow lives in a tiny flat. Other characters Ishvar and Omprakash, and Maneck Kohlah, a young student are constructing their new lives coming together in Dina's flat. Their lives have entwined in such circumstances no one could have foreseen. In the beginning, Omprakash is suspicious about the motive of Dina thinking that she is exploiting them in the tailoring business giving them low salary. This makes him spy on Dina in order to find out the export company so that he can make a direct contact and get orders himself.

As the novel advances, these unlucky characters discover that there are other forces at play larger than their individual self. Their circumstances conspire to deny them their modest aspirations. Each character is bound to face irrevocable damages. Although Mistry narrates the disappointments and death of Maneck, the end of the novel confirms, the author's faith in life. The central message of the novel is the metaphorical unfinished quilt sewn by Dina. She collects the little pieces of clothes to make it. The other three characters – Ishvar, Omprakash, and Maneck – join in at a later stage in order to help Dina. Every little piece of cloth is linked with memory of some or the other event. The tailor's history gradually gathers shape just like the quilt of Dina.

Ishvar, a different character in comparison to others, for whom regret is luxury which "he could not afford enjoys locating the oldest piece of fabric, moving chronologically, patch by patch, reconstructing the chain of their mishaps and triumphs, till they reached the uncompleted corner" (126). Mistry, in *A Fine Balance*, successfully has narrated and re-narrated the stories of country, culture, and communities around a certain point of time and space just like the fabric piece of quilt.

Analyzing the novel in terms of time and space, Meenakshi Mukherjee believes that all narratives are to be read in the context of specific time and place. According to her, ". . . while the narratives emerge out of a culture, they also contribute towards the construction of definition of this culture. Stories and communities are thus bound together in a symbolic relationship" (155). She also believes that the ability to create community is not only "an attribute of the epic and the oral tale, but in a less concrete and more ambivalent way one of the major powers of the narrative fiction today" (155). Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, to some extent, gives emphasis on the contradiction embedded within the culture itself. This might have arisen as the result of an interplay between promises and commitments of the past and reality of the present. There is the tendency of exihibiting keen interest in the recent past than the remote past by the writers of the successive generations. This is also a seminal and phenomenal departure from tradition. In Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, it can be seen that cultural patterns find internalization and adaptation within the stories of the individuals; it signifies that the novel is a synthesis of culture and history. As the author himself is sensitive to history, he portrays the major intellectual, cultural or political problems of his own time.

Mistry's *A Fine Balance* is such a text in which history gets into the novel rather unobstrusively. It meanders between different social and cultural consciousness. Mistry's narration is basically confined to the period of Internal Emergency like that of Rushdie and Shashi Tharoor. Rushdie, while analyzing Emergency asserts, "The reason why so many of us were outraged by the Emergency went beyond the dictatorial atmosphere of those days, beyond the jailing of opponents and the forcible sterilizations. The reason was . . . that it was during the Emergency that the lid flew off the Pandora's box of communal diacord" (3). The communal harmony has been shattered and trouble lingers here and there in each and every corner throughout India. Rushdie again observes, "the imposition of the Emergency was an act of folly," it represented "the triumph of cynicism in Indian public life" (4). Mistry, agreeing to this view, narrates the historical facts in the form of fiction.

As a narrator Mistry has double status. His insider-outsider status, which has added a political-historical dimension to the novel, strengthens the readers to view the deteriorated situation from various angles. Regarding Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, in the view of Homi Bhabha, "represents the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of the social and the forces that signify the more specific address the contentious unequal interests and identities within the population" (279). This is an overall generalization of the novel looking the things from the scholar's eyes.

The characters, in *A Fine Balance*, more or less articulate the author's concerns more vocally and he is too skeptical of the fact regarding the declaration of the Emergency and centralizes the exclusions of the historiographers. This has led him to frame out the plot of the novel hoping to fill up the existing gaps in the national history of India. The way he has narrated the story makes it obvious. For Mistry, even the partition of the subcontinent has become remote for which only occasional

references are made about it. He is totally concerned with "murder, suicide, Naxalite-terrorist killing, police-custody death . . ." (6). Moreover, the authorial feelings in the novel are conveyed distinctly in the epigraph:

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

The epigraph itself stresses the truth of the incidents/stories of the novel. In actuality, Mistry through this novel, attempts to offer a voice to marginalized sections and, at the same time, raises relevant questions regarding the atrocity of the Emergency. The possibility of turning the fictitious accounts of the predicament of the protagonists into truth has made Mistry's *A Fine Balance* a novel as history. By here, what can be inferred is that what has happened to Maneck Kohlah, Omprakash, and Ishvar may happen to any Indian. There is the maximum chance that a whole arena of marginalized groups such as the Parsis, the Chamaars, the Muslims, the beggars share the same novelistic space. They can also produce history by establishing a community or group of identity.

In Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, the characters have an anxiety that the political status quo exists deep rootedly. As one of the characters in the novel utters, "nothing changes. Years pass, and nothing changes" (142). For Jonathan Culler, in this context, "the creation of a nation involves the positing of a history; to be the member of this group is, precisely to take certain stories in some sense your stories, your past" (6). He further observes, "Narrative discourse, particularly its structures of address posits an

imagined community which is much like a nation, in that it consists of people who have no idea of each other actual existence but who are constituted as 'we' by the discursive structures of the text" (6). Relying on this fact Mistry has created an imagined community of the marginalized people of India through the characters – Dina, Ashraf, Dukhi Mochi, Narayan, Maneck, Ishvar, and Omprakash.

Moreover, Mistry also takes a cue from Benedict Anderson regarding the concept of history, who posits, "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail . . . the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). He also tries to problematize the totalizing concept of nation as well as history and presents subversive accounts to highlight cultural differences. He directs his narration in his desired manner by presenting more than one versions of the same event. To take an example from the novel, for a common man the Emergency is nothing but "one more government tamasha" (5). Another man utters, "No consideration for people like us. Murder, suicide . . . everything ends up delaying the trains" (5-6). For the people holding some influential post, "with the emergency, everything is upside-down. Black can be made white, day turned into night. With the right influence and a little cash, sending people to jail is very easy. There's even a new law called MISA to simplify the whole procedure" (299). The meaning and value of the Emergency is quite not similar to various people.

For a Parsi woman like Dina, it is only "government problems – games played by people in power. It does not affect ordinary people like us" (75). The way Dina evaluates the influence of the Emergency, she is found to be wrong as even the ordinary people, like Dina, Omprakash, Maneck, Ishvar, and the beggars are affected by it. However, the upper-class people are fascinated by the Emergency as it fulfills their desires. For this, they consider it as a magic wand, capable of curing all kind of

diseases and decay. Upper class business woman like Mrs. Gupta is in favor of the atrocious Emergency:

> The Prime Minister's declaration yesterday of Internal Emergency had incarcerated most of the parliamentary opposition, along with thousands of trade unionists, students and social workers. (73)

Mrs. Gupta stands for her class and she exclaims "No, no, no!" in order to reply Dina's arguments that the court found Indira Gandhi guilty of cheating in the election. She further says, "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). On the other side, students are fighting for their own reasons. They have the hope that by following Jaya Prakash Narayana, it will be easy to bring radical reforms and "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" (243). Regarding this, Avinash, the student activist, teaches Maneck:

> Three weeks ago the High Court found the Prime Minister guilty of cheating in the last elections. Which meant she had to step down but she began stalling. So the opposite parties, student organizations, trade unions – they started mass demonstrations across the country. All calling for her resignation. Then, to hold on the power, she claimed that the country's security was threatened by internal disturbances, and declared a State of Emergency. (245)

As Maneck is unwilling to take part in political affairs, Avinash tries his best to arouse an interest so that he will involve in students' movement against Indira

Gandhi's State-of-Internal Emergency. Moreover, Avinash tries to clarify Maneck concerning the ongoing political turmoil for which he asserts, "Under the pretext of Emergency, fundamental rights have been suspended, most of the opposition is under arrest, union leaders are in jail, and even some student leaders" (245). However, Avinash is unable to move Maneck because of his reluctance to become active in the student movement.

In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry leaves aside his authorial voice and speaks through disillusionments and disenchantments of his characters. The character, Sergeant Kesar, under the pretext of beautification, rampaged the slums, "tearing into the structures of plywood, corrugated metal, and plastic" (295). The major objective of the Emergency is to disturb the lives of the poor people in the name of beautification. In no time the dwelling of Ishvar, Omprakash, and Rajaram is destroyed by the machines which transform "the familiar field with its carefully ordered community into an alien place" (296). The program of beautification deprives the people of their homes. On the other side, the forced sterilization camps deprive youth like Omprakash of their dreams – in the case of Omprakash, his castration.

These facts are the facts of historical Emergency. Mistry, despite his exaggeration of the reality, captures the reality of the Emergency. Numerous officers are involved in charge of various projects and they manipulate the figures to their advantage. Indian common people are transformed into a commodity, "Late in the day the truck arrived at an irrigating project where the Facilitator unloaded the ninety-six individuals. The project manager counted them before signing the delivery receipt" (331). At the meantime, several party workers are busy in arranging the Prime Minister's meetings. They are trying to gather a huge crowd for it, "there will be a payment of five rupees for each person. Also free tea and snack. Please line up

outside at seven-thirty. Buses will leave at eight" (258). These scenes of the novel clearly show that how the government is manipulating the common people taking advantage of their state of poverty.

Besides these atrocities and manipulations, in order to add the woes of the people, the constitution and relevant laws are amended or modified such that they will suit the purpose of the people at the centre. One of the humorous characters of the novel, Mr. Valmik laments, "What are we to say, madam? What are we to think about the state of this nation? When the highest court in the land turns the Prime Minister's guilt into innocent" (562). Here, Mistry, through the words of Mr. Valmik, criticizes the Indian politics during the Emergency period. Mistry's *A Fine Balance* depicts all the three protagonists living under constant threat of oppression. It has displayed various overlapping episodes which show the author's sympathy for the subdued. At the same time, he also shows his rage against the oppressive authority.

Mistry's depiction of the seemingly separate stories of Maneck, Dina, Ishvar, and Omprakash enables him to narrate interactions/interrelations between different class backgrounds existing in Indian society. The woman's plight in the society has been represented by the struggle and endurance of Dina. *A Fine Balance* does not concern with centre of Parsi community although Maneck and Dina are Parsi characters. Nusswan, the brother of Dina, represents male dominance and false pride of the community. He criticizes the Hindus with these words: "Do you know how fortunate you are in our community? Among the unenlightened, widows are thrown away like garbage. If you were a Hindu, in the old days you would have had to be a good little Sati and leap onto your husband's funeral pyre, be roasted with him" (52). Mistry is against of such false pride of one's own community as his is the project of bringing a fine balance among several communities of India.

Similarly, Ishvar and Omprakash represents the Chamaar caste. A clear description of Chamaar's way of life has been presented in Mistry's narrative. He even throws light on describing the trivial details like how they skin the carcass, eat meat and tan the hide with a great interest and touching sublety, for example, "And as he mastered the skills . . . Dukhi's own skin became impregnated with the odour that was part of his father's smell" (95). Because of the upper-caste's cruelty, Dukhi Mochi has learned the lesson how to survive with humiliation and forbearance as his constant companions. He is successful to break the timeless chain of caste by sending his sons to Ashraf to be apprenticed as tailors. He is also forced to pay dearly for his rebellious action of transforming his sons' occupation from leather workers to tailors. Dukhi Mochi and his son Narayan discuss about the change; the father believes that change takes place gradually, on the other hand, Narayan desires for a respectful life of the untouchables very sooner and he does not find this in his village for which he bemoans:

> But what about the major important things? Government passes new laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than criminals. More than twenty years have passed since independence. How much longer? I want to be able to drink from the village well, worship in the temple, walk where I like. (142)

Although Narayan is rebellious in comparison to his father in this narrative, his is the silent resistance which is yet to be heard by the upper-castes. His marginalized position does not allow him to raise voice for his caste going against the tyranny of the upper-castes. What he can do is to discuss the matter with his fellow members of his own caste in the form of silent resistance. Moreover, Mistry through the eyes of

Narayan, observes the reality of Indian society; his narrative, at the same time, threatens the upper-castes of India in an indirect manner. This is, too, his marginalized Parsi position in India although Parsis are economically and sometime politically strengthened. They are marginalized religiously – their community is looked at as a foreign culture despite the fact that historically they are the inhabitants of India since their arrival from Iran.

Mistry's *A Fine Balance* tries to achieve a balance between the personal and the general in such a way that the text ventures to locate the lives of its characters in a historical context by juxtaposing the personal in relation to the general. His protagonists are found to have little control over their circumstances. It is to infer that history happens to them. To exemplify an evidence from the novel, the Hindu-Muslim riot, on the eve of India's Independence, drags Ishvar and Narayan into confrontation with a crowd. This is done while they try to safeguard Ashraf's family. Similarly, at a later stage, Omprakash and Ishvar are forced to work at a labor camp site very inhumanely. Besides this, Omprakash is unfortunately victimized by the sterilization program transforming him into an eunach. Thus, Mistry tends to become a realist author and his realistic mode of portraying real characters brings to the forefront the deteriorated living conditions of the lower-caste people basically in rural India. He is also able to juxtapose the metropolis with an unknown "village by a river" – also a subtitle of the novel.

With the arrival of globalization in Indian land, the quiet of the mountains is disturbed as multinational companies are established gradually. This causes a serious problem for the indigenous mountain-dwellers affecting their lives adversely. The father of Maneck Kohlah, Farokh Kohlah, a victim of India's Partition, has started a business of soft-drink which is suffered badly because of a modernized plant, leading

him to reveries. The advent of globalization along with the development drive has brought ecological degradation of the Himalayas and the death of native enterprises can be suggested in Mistry's narration as:

> But the day soon came when the mountains began to leave them. It started with roads. Engineers . . . promised roads that would hum with the swift passage of modern traffic. Roads, wide and heavy-duty to replace scenic mountain path's too narrow for the broad vision of nation builders and World Bank Officials. (215)

Stopping the impact of globalization has become a difficult and unimaginable job in India. Mistry, besides narrating the living experiences, has endeavored to depict concerns for neglected regions of a vast country like India as he is aware of the fact that the people of India still live in villages. Mistry's narrative development covers the simplicity of rural life and the complexities of city life, however, the shift is remarkably towards more urban and modern situation. It signifies that Mistry, as a Parsi author, rediscovers his roots and tries to understand Indian reality in terms of his past experience – now, in the novel these experiences are encaptured in his/his characters' memories – and tradition.

Mistry's project in *A Fine Balance* is to create a kaleidoscopic image of modern India. He has maintained this by portraying individual prototypes. Many of his characters such as Dukhi, Roopa, Radha, Narayan, Ashraf, Ishvar, Omprakash are marginalized people – marginalized in the sense that they are considered to be untouchables by the upper-caste people in Indian society. To depict the history of India, he has created characters who represent both oppressors and oppressed. For instance, Roopa, though she herself a Chamaar by caste, rebukes a Bhungi when he goes towards the hut of Narayan. She, at the same time, uses the same language as her

upper-caste oppressors: "Where do you think you are going? . . . I'll bathe your filthy skin with the boiling water" (133). Furthermore, she warns her son Narayan, "we are not going to deal with such low-caste people! How can you even think of measuring someone who carts the shit from people's houses" (133)? Mistry is totally against of the caste-system prevailing in India. More than this, even there is discrimination among the lower-castes. Cobblers are considered to be higher in comparison to the Bhungis who cart shits from people's houses. Therefore, Mistry tries to criticize this notorious system of Hindus by bringing a kind of consciousness among the followers of caste-system.

In the likewise manner, The Monkey Man, Beggar Master, the rent collector, Rajaram are depicted as the characters playing the role of persecutors and that of persecuted. The authoritative brutality is represented by Sergeant Kesar and Thakur Dharamsi. With the development of the narrative, the death of Avinash, Maneck, and Maneck's father can be seen. Surprisingly, Mistry's characters are shown to be silent recipients as they don't try to rise above the level of individual or personal resistance. They lack the power to strike back or to cause ripples – they resist in a silent mode. Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, like history, can be considered to be incomplete in itself as it represents the reality partially and incoherently giving space to several gaps. In this sense, Guy Lawson rightly puts, "Mistry and Dickens are interested in those to whom history happens, those with the control over their circumstances" (22). Nilufer Bharucha, in this regard, opines that "Mistry's subalterns do not really speak but their silences are represented through the mediation of Mistry's narrative" (25). I, myself, is not in the mood to consider Mistry's characters from the perspective of subalterneity, however, I accept the mediation of the author through his narrative.

Moreover, Mistry's narrative depicts the plight of common people of India. For instance, Mr. Valmik subscribes to the Hindu belief of destiny and utters, "our lives are but a sequence of accidents – a clanking chain of chance events. A string of choices, casual or deliberate, which add up to that big calamity we call life" (564). However, he is not so pessimistic and expresses his optimistic views, "There is always hope – hope enough to balance our despair. Or we would be lost" (563). Thus, Mistry has the belief that if we are unable to consider a fine balance between hope and despair, the meaning of our lives may result to an emptiness. The emptiness of history can be overcome by filling its gaps giving energy to our memories as they are too tied to our lives.

In Misty's *A Fine Balance*, there is no such correlation between his geographical distance and the narrativization of the contemporary reality. The truth is that his visit to India in 1988 revitalized him. To consider Mistry's personal history, he had returned to Bombay, in the words of his brother, to "refamiliarize himself with the sights, sounds, smells that would henceforth people in his works" (11). In narrating this novel, he might have flipped through old newspapers and journals thereby implicating whatever information he got about the state of India in order to create a new history. In the novel, his character, Maneck, has gone through the same exercise to fill the gap of his absence of eight years.

Mistry's *A Fine Balance* stems out from the darker contours of Indian democracy dealing with the political turmoils and also with people. Mocking the highest authority, the author becomes vocal at times:

> All the best of times, democracy is a see saw between chaos and tolerable confusion. You see, a democratic omelette is not possible

> from eggs bearing democratic labels but laid by the tyrannical hen. (372)

Metaphorically, Mistry analyzes the Indian democracy, especially, Indira Gandhi's so-called democracy of the Emergency as a product of tyrannical action. Such a democracy which brings beautification program by clearing the slums of the city, the program of sterilization by turning the poor males into eunuchs, and by killing the innocent students such as Avinash. Mistry cannot bear the atrocities – destruction, loss, etc. – and tries to relief himself by re-narrating the history of India in his novel, sometimes taking facts and other times journeying through his memories of the past which I will develop in my later chapter.

In addition to this, *A Fine Balance* bears a clear sign of its author's contempt. Mistry's voice can be observed in the taxi-driver's evaluation of Indira Gandhi's government and its notorious activities:

> Same way all her problems started. With her own mischief making. Just like Sri-Lanka, Kashmir, Assam, Tamil Nadu. In Punjab, she was helping one group to make trouble for state government . . . She gave her blessings to guns and bombs, and then these wicked, violent instruments began hitting her own government. How do you say in English – all her chickens come home for roasting, isn't it? (582)

This taxi-driver's evaluation of the ongoing circumstance in his own language speaks for thousands of Indians' unspoken thoughts, "Aray, it's the work of criminal gangs paid by her party. Some ministers are even helping the gangs, providing official lists of Sikh homes and businesses. Otherwise, its not possible for the killers to work so efficiently, so accurately, in such a big city" (582). The harassment laden over the Sikhs has been avoided by the national historiographers; therefore, Mistry attempts to

recover this exclusion through his novel. His narrative voice presents an account in the life of the country between 1945 and 1984. In this regard, K.C. Bellippa opines that Mistry "has made it possible for Indian novel in English to explore into areas of human experience which were hitherto only tangentially touched upon" (22). I agree with Bellipa's opinion because in a novel like *A Fine Balance*, everything of the subject-matter of history cannot be directly stated.

Besides this, Mistry's version of history has scattered into several dimensions. He has given emphasis on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences in a vast country like India. In the words of A.K. Singh, "The prime aim of the literature is to initiate dialogue where it does not exist, particularly between the people and the communities that share certain geo-socio-eco-political and cultural space" (109). In *A Fine Balance,* Chamaars, delineating a world of underprivileged classes with their aspirations and assertions, profusely offer social articulation of difference from minority perspective. This formation of alternative histories of the excluded establishes a pluralist anarchy and, at the same time, it also recreates the nation it belongs to. Observing the novel minutely, it can be established that the interplay of fact and fiction, that is, history and imaginative memories it has gained a vigorous strength. Mistry's *A Fine Balance* presents histories from a writer's point of view that tries to expose the suppressed or excluded contents of Indian history. His endeavor of narrating and re-narrating history has empowered him to construct his story of his community and nation by taking several cues from his as well as the characters' memories.

III. Memory and the Language of Resistance

The relation between history and memory has changed in many ways under the impact of the Holocaust. Aleida Assman observing on their relationship elaborates: "Memory that had been discarded by historians as an unreliable and distorting source came to be acknowledged as an important factor in the reconstruction of past events, thus advancing from a rival to a partner of historiography" (261). By here, it becomes clear that memory has become one of the essential elements of history. Now, it is fruitful to accept that these two questions – what has happened? and how was the event experienced, how is it remembered, and passed onto succeeding generations? – are complementary to each other. Memories are important for a historian because they can help bridge the gap between the abstract academic account and the intensely painful and fragmented personal experience. I consider the relationship between history and memory to be a form of partnership as both of them help to access, reconstruct, and represent the past giving birth to a new historical memory, that is, an alternative history. Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, in order to fulfill the gaps of India's national historiography, adopts memories of the author as well as the individual memories of several characters thereby creating a pluralist critical alternative history. Stephen Smith, in his essay "There from Here," states that he posed a question whether the dependence on memory rather than reality causes problems in his fictional recreation of India, Mistry explained:

> Some people might say it's arrogant of me not to live there and assume that I know everything from a visit every five or six years. But I'm confident that I do know. It's memory. Well – I suppose that when one says memory, it's memory plus imagination, which creates a new

> memory. When I don't have that, I will not write about it. I have promised myself that. (65)

Here, the point that I appreciate is Mistry's insistence on the creation of new memory combining memory and imagination. This new memory affects the national history by including the intensely painful and fragmented personal experiences. In doing so, it challenges the existing national historiography in order to create an anarchist alternative history, that is, a critical history, which gives due respect to the marginalized voices of a nation. Moreover, I consider that Mistry's reliance on memory and imagination indicates his resistance to the authority of India in general and the notorious rule of Indira Gandhi with her declaration of Emergency in particular. Being himself a Parsi, that is, a member of a minority community, his inclination towards the marginalized groups of India can be overwhelmingly seen through his own memories as a narrator and his unlucky oppressed and exploited characters' individual memories. Mistry's project has the purpose to raise questions against India's cruelest social constrain – the caste system. Even the economically fit Parsis are the victims of caste system as it adopts the principle of untouchability which is unacceptable to their community.

Besides this, *A Fine Balance* opposes the Emergency of the 1970s declared under Indira Gandhi's atrocious rule. This novel also captures an intensified and ambiguous historical moment and the fading memories of a colonial past. Allan Megill, in the essay "History, Memory, Identity," argues that "memory is valorized when identity is threatened. Memory may well be central to the construction and reproduction of political identities over time, but in moment of crisis people hark back to the past with amplified intensity" (40). In *A Fine Balance*, when Dina, a Parsi lady rushes to sell her husband's old violin, Mistry memorizes the event of Shivsena's

demonstrations against the South Indians: "She had to duck inside a library while demonstrators rampaged briefly through the street, breaking store windows and shouting slogans against the influx of South Indians into the city who were stealing their jobs" (62). Mistry might be suggesting that the plight of the Parsis and other minorities would be the same as that of the South Indians living in the city, Bombay. His personal memory becomes the collective memory of different communities of India as he has depicted the Parsi community, Hindu community (Chamaars and Brahmins), and Muslim community. As in memory studies, according to Michael G. Kenny, "personal and collective identity are intimately linked," (420) there is also an interface between individual and collective history and memory. The main implication of this is that a new alternative critical history can be created out of one's personal memory. To achieve this purpose, Mistry creates a language of resistance emanating from his personal memory as well as the memories of his characters in which most of his characters show their anger towards the national authority of India thereby giving a vigor to the marginalized voices to bloom in his critical history seeking their respectful identities. Thus, Mistry resists personally through his memory and collectively through his characters' memories despite the fact that his characters resist in a silent mode as he desires to bring a fine balance between revenge and reconciliation. Here, Mistry's personal memory is intersected with the life of his character – being a Parsi himself, his identity might be shattered as he was born in Bombay.

Similarly, Ishvar urges his brother's son Omprakash to have patience as somethings cannot be changed and one has to accept them. Omprakash thinks that his uncle has the habit of swaying from side by side. Actually, Omprakash does not like his owner Dina, as for him, she exploits them to make more profit; however, Ishvar

advises him not to curse Dina. At this moment, Omprakash utters, "First you said struggle, don't give up. Now you're saying just accept it. Swaying from side to side, like a pot without an arse" (83). In reply his uncle memorizes the past event: "Your grandmother Roopa used to say that" (83). Roopa has previously remarked this statement in order to resist the atrocity of the upper-castes. By here, Mistry establishes that upper-caste people are just like a pot without an arse – having an ambiguous norms and values, they show their supremacy.

Mistry, in *A Fine Balance*, remembers the historical memory of India. All facts of the Partition are not written down by the national historiographers. Mistry might have heard the memories of the survivors of Partition riots. While narrating about Ibrahim's reluctance to leave his daily wear, however compelled to change himself due to Hindu-Muslim riots, Mistry narrates the memory as:

> The only other time he had forsaken this fixture of daily wear was during Partition, back in 1947, when communal slaughter at the brand-new border had ignited riots everywhere, and sporting a fez in a Hindu neighbourhood was as fatal as possessing a foreskin in a Muslim one. In certain areas it was wisest to go bareheaded, for choosing incorrectly among fez, white cap, and turban could mean losing one's head. (87)

Here, Mistry is conscious of the fact that sometimes human beings are forced to hide their identities in order to save their lives. However, losing one's own identity makes him/her go through a kind of trauma whose recovery at that time is quite difficult. Hearing or reading these sorts of traumas may leave another trauma in the mind of human beings. Mistry, relying on this fact, might be trying himself to get an immediate recovery by narrating his novel through his and his charaters' memories.

Moreover, Parsis are in between the Hindus and Muslims whenever such riots occur in India. In the novel, considering the Indian Muslims as marginalized section of India, Mistry tends to become partial by symphathizing with the Muslim problems through his character, Ashraf who also helps his friend Dukhi by keeping his sons, Narayan and Ishvar at his home and training them to become tailors.

As memory has become the domain of foregrounding resistance to the political authority, seeking one's own identity, in Mistry's *A Fine Balance* too, we can find out several forms of resistance blooming out of the characters – Dukhi Mochi, the father of Narayan and Ishvar; Dina, a Parsi widow; Omprakash, the nephew of Ishvar; Avinash, a student friend of Maneck Kohlah; etc. In one of the episodes, Dukhi Mochi has worked hard all day, yet he has been thrashed and cheated of his payment for which he shows his anger against Thakur: "I could kill that Thakur. Nothing but a lowly theif. And they are all like that. They treat us like animals. Always have, from the days of our forefathers" (105). Here, the individual memory of Dukhi Mochi gets the chance to interplay with the history of caste discrimination that has been ongoing in India. The Brahmins and Thakurs, the so-called upper-castes have been dominating and posing discrimination and inequality towards the lower-castes (especially untouchables – Chamaars, Darjis, etc.) for a long period of time; Mistry as a Parsi himself, that is, he is out of the boundary of the caste system, resists from the side of the lower-castes. Although Parsis are economically strong and prosperous in India, they are a minority group religiously and socially and are sidelined in the history of postcolonial India.

A similar sort of resistance to the authority can be exemplified from the words of Dukhi Mochi when he converses with his son Narayan about the ongoing election. For Dukhi Mochi, the leaders are not fulfilling their promises of new schools, clean

water, and health care; promises of land for landless peasants, through distribution and stricter enforcement of the Land Ceiling Act; promises of powerful laws to punish any discrimination against, and harassment of, backward castes by upper-castes; promises to abolish bonded labor, child labor, sati, dowry system, and child marriage. The Parsis of India are outside the caste system of Hindus for which being a Parsi himself, Mistry, seeks to energize these issues through his narrative of memory. Dukhi Mochi converses with his son, Narayan, regarding the nature of the political leaders: "There must be a lot of Duplication in our country's laws . . . Every time there are elections, they talk of passing the same ones passed twenty years ago. Someone should remind them they need to apply the laws" (143). In response to his father's views, Narayan states, "For politicians passing laws is like passing water . . . it all ends down the drain" (143). In doing so, Mistry tends to resist the authority of Indian politics from a distant land showing his sympathy towards the marginalized people of India.

Omprakash, Mistry's rebellious character, has a different type of resistance to his cleanser of his parents, that is, Thakur Dharamsi; who has killed all of the family members of Omprakash except himself and his uncle Ishvar. The sense of revenge comes out of him because of the traumatic events of the caste violence imposed on his family by Thakur Dharamsi, now a politically-sheltered Brahmin. Omprakash exposes his anger by stating:

> I will gather a small army of Chamaars, provide them with weapons, then march to the landlords' houses," said Omprakash, his sewing machine racing. "It will be easy to find enough men. We'll do it like the Naxalites." Head bent over his work, he described for Ishvar and Ashraf Chacha the strategies employed by the peasant uprisings of the

> northeast. "At the end of it we'll cut off their heads and put them on spikes in the market place. Their kinds will never dare to oppress our community again." (149)

Omprakash's anger towards the upper-castes has been dangerously increased similar to the rebellious groups of Indian politics. Jenny Edkins, in her essay "Remembering Relationality: Trauma Time and Politics," argues:

> The way in which events such as wars, genocides, and famines are remembered is fundamental to the production and reproduction of centralized political power. However, memory is central not only to the production of these forms of power but also to their contestation: certain types of memory, the memory of catastrophic events, for example, provide specific openings for resistance to cetralized political power. (101)

Omprakash's attitude of taking revenge is the outcome of resisting to centralized political power, that is, Thakur Dharamsi and his Congress Party in tandem with Indira Gandhi's State-of-Internal Emergency. Thus, ways of remembrance are a site of struggle and contestation. Mistry's *A Fine Balance* has established this fact from the memories of the marginalized characters.

Moreover, in order to create his historical memory vigorous, Mistry bases his narrative on Partition memories. Although he has narrated a brief history of Partition, it has its own importance; it provides an extra ground to weave other forms of memories such as the memory of caste violence, the memory of the atrocity caused by the State-of-Emergency under Indira Gandhi's rule, and so on. The time after Independence has been memorized as the time of long-lasting turmoil in the history of modern India; Mistry narrates the memory as:

> Meanwhile sporadic riots which had started with the talk of independence were spreading as the country's Partition became a reality. "May be it's better to stay where you are for the time being" said Ashraf, while Mumtaz glared at him. "The devil is not doing his evil work in our town. You know all the neighbours, you have lived here for many years. And even if your village is peaceful, it's still the wrong time to start a new business." (122)

Here, the way communal violence had spreaded just after Independence is described as a slow poison which after entering inside the body spreads itself gradually. The memory of Independence might be considered as the happiest period in Indian history; however, the memory of Partition of India along with its unforgettable communal violence has taken the shape of a gloomy past which is recorded in the official history as statistics and numbers. Ashraf, a Muslim tailor suggests Ishvar and Narayan, the sons of Dukhi Mochi, whom he has trained as tailors converting them from their previous Chamaar caste, not to leave the place where they are staying for sometime. Starting a new business of tailoring in the village for Narayan is also not appropriate for the time being due to the spreading of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims slowly all over India although the same situation is not arrived in Ishvar and Narayan's village and the town of Ashraf itself.

When Mistry refers to the historical fact that the talk of Independence were spreading as the country's Partition became a reality, he at the same times indicates that the partition of British India was an inconceivable idea to the Congress. It was also a self-declared representative of the nation as the party laid claim to the state and the entire territory of British India. Although it became apparent that the partition between Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan was intended to resolve all contests, it did

not resolve all the contentious issues. Rather, it became a dominant theme in the concerned countries in different ways even today. Mistry has laid emphasis on the fact that the declaration of State-of-Emergency might be one of the impacts of Partition. The Partition has become a fearful spectacle in the cultural memory of both countries. At the same time, it continues to linger as a perpetual challenge to the territorial authority of the successor states.

Mistry, in *A Fine Balance,* is conscious of the fact that the division of the country and the establishment of the two independent states of India and Pakistan occurred with remarkable suddenness and in a manner that the people did not expect concerning the immediate future. It seems that neither the leaders nor the administration were prepared for the massive transfer of population that accompanied the Partition and Independence. In the novel, Ashraf, the Muslim tailor foresees the future impact of the spreading communal violence between Hindus and Muslims: "Why are you acting stupid? Sooner or later the trouble will come here. No matter what happens, it will never be the same again between the two communities" (125). He tries to persuade his wife Mumtaz to leave the Hindu town of their birth and move towards a Muslim community, that is, Paskistan – the home of all Muslims. Mistry is conscious of the bygone historical turmoil, but again he confides himself in the memory of the massive population transference between the two countries. The mobilization of opinion in support of the demand for a separate Muslim homeland, the first formal articulation of this demand, and the establishment of Pakistan as a separate nation, according to Meenakshie Verma in her book *Aftermath: An Oral History of Violence*, "occurred in the space of a relatively short time" (iv). She further expresses that the indeterminacy of the entire process can be seen from the fact that

the boundaries between the two new states were not officially known until two days after two countries have formally become independent.

Mistry's *A Fine Balance* rests on the notion how past can influence the present and the future. For instance, Dukhi Mochi, the father of Ishvar and Narayan – both of them are converted to tailors now – and his friends discuss the ongoing developments, that is, the spreading communal violence, in the evening. They are confused by the varying accounts that reach them of events in faraway towns and villages. All of them are conscious of the fact that the Brahmins and Thakurs treat them as animals. They consider: "The Muslims have behaved more like our brothers than the bastard Brahmins and Thakurs" (123). Mistry's depiction of this very scene consisting of memory of the downtrodden people of India in *A Fine Balance* provides us the ample ground to consider that Partition allows the ground to raise the question of identity among the marginalized groups. For Ishvar and Narayan and their father Dukhi Mochi, the Muslim tailor Ashraf is a savior for he trains the brothers the skill of tailoring by keeping them at his own home just to show his friendship with an untouchable who is almost disliked by the Brahmins and Thakurs for they consider themselves as superior among the caste lines.

Even the ideological function of Partition historiography has been different from that of Holocaust literature – it is widely known in the production of historical memory. Mistry focuses on violence, atrocity, discrimination, domination, etc. basing himself on memories, for example, the memory of a long journey in the life of Ashraf and Mumtaz is narrated thus:

> "Yes, keep it ready for tomorrow," said Ashraf. "The rest we will lock in the shop. Inshallah, someday we will be able to come back and

> claim it." He gathered the children for bed. "Come, we must sleep early tonight. Tomorrow we have to start a long journey." (125)

This long journey of uncertainty, here in the case of Muslim community, is quite different in comparison to an event of Holocaust during the Nazi regime; this is because there is a little hope in the mind of Ashraf. His speech, that is, "someday we will be able to come back and claim it" gives us the sense that hope has never ended for he is too tied to his land of birth. The author of *Aftermath: An Oral History of Violence*, Meenakshie Verma, while differentiating between Partition and Holocaust literature asserts: "The investigation has not, in this stance, been primarily concerned with assigning guilt to the opposing sides. The chief object has not even been to consolidate different ethnic/national identities in South Asia, though there is certainly an element of this especially right-wing discourse" (iv). By here, what Verma tries to suggest is that the unusual account of violence and the relationship between violence and community regarding Partition and its memory cannot be equated with the literature of Holocaust. Mistry, in *A Fine Balance*, too, wants to show the unique impact of the violence of Partition.

There are several incidents in the novel in which the characters see the communal violence of Partition – violence between Hindus and Muslims – when they suppose that their place is the place of communal harmony. In one of the incidents, Narayan has an idea to change the signboard outside Mazaffar Tailoring Company into Krishna Tailors in case Ashraf's family has to face difficulty during the cruel time of communal violence. A Hindu name is likely to save the family of Ashraf; Narayan and Ishvar are eveready to do anything in order to save this family as they are also a part of it. Ishvar proceeds to fetch a new board, but Ashraf suggests him "to be careful" and not to "go through a Muslim area" (127). All of a sudden, Ishvar returns

without having reached his destination empty-handed. He has seen an unusual incident so he describes, "Lots of shops and houses on fire. I kept going – slowly, slowly. Then I saw people with axes. They were chopping a man. That scared me, I turned back" (127). These incidents are the outcome of Partition which was supposed to be an antidote to the fever of inequality ongoing in the modern nation-state.

Mistry is aware of the fact that the deepening malaise of the modern nation-state is scarcely in doubt. All of the diagnoses and prescriptions prescribed by the historians are still the subject of considerable disagreement and debate. Not only this but also some have detected the roots of the problem in the very condition of modernity as transposed and superimposed by colonialism. However, it would be appropriate to look closely at the principal constituent of sub-regional nationalities. To enforce this view, Verma argues: "In the South Asian context, a dynamic process of adaptation and appropriation of the values of democracy and development has been undertaken by a variety of nonstate actors, who forged solidarities along religious, regional, linguistic and caste affiliation" (vi). Although there have been considerable scholarly works that look for remedies for such exclusionary politics, some of these formulations are based on ahistorical and essentialized assumptions. Mistry, in his *A Fine Balance*, proceeds to fulfill this gap by considering the balance between memory and history in order to create a new historical memory of India allowing a space to grow the language of resistance. Creating a new memory is itself resisting to the hitherto available history; Mistry creates a critical history of plurality giving an extra vigor to memory – memory of caste violence, memory of Internal Emergency, and memory of Partition violence.

Now, I will interpret these three categories of memory in terms of resistance. Although the major characters in *A Fine Balance* are compelled to defeat at large by

their circumstances, that is, the atrocity of the upper-castes, the cruelty of Emergency, and the unforgettable Hindu-Muslim riots of Partition, their resistances towards the authority cannot be underestimated. Regarding the memory of caste violence, Mistry in the novel, sharpens his own memory of the ongoing discrimination in the rural section of Indian society. Dukhi Mochi's father tells him the details of discrimination and humiliation he has to face in the village. Because of this, Dukhi masters a full catalog of the real and imaginary crimes a low caste person can commit. At the same time, the corresponding punishments are engraved upon his memory. Intersecting Dukhi's memory with his own memory of the Indian society, Mistry narrates:

> By the time he entered his teens, he had acquired all the knowledge he would need to perceive that invisible line of caste he could never cross, to survive in the village like his ancestors, with humiliation and forbearance as his constant companions. (97)

The capacity to tolerate the extreme atrocity perpetrated by the upper-castes towards the lower-castes is diminishing within Dukhi. For Mistry, Dukhi is bound to resist the upper-castes' cruelty finding himself unable to bear the humiliation as his ancestors. With the changing of time, Dukhi desires to achieve freedom – freedom from the constrain of caste system. Along with the memory of caste violence, the memory of the Freedom struggle of India is also depicted in the novel to give a chronology to historical memory. A crowd has gathered as soon as some leaders of the Indian National Congress visit Ashraf's town. In their speech, the leaders announce: "We have been slaves in our own country for too long. And the time has come to fight for liberty" (107). One has to make a chronology of Mistry's historical memory himself/herself as the novel is framed out by taking events bit by bit from India's history.

Moreover, in *A Fine Balance*, Mistry memorizes the speech of the leaders regarding the notion of untouchability. These leaders consider untouchability as a dangerous disease:

> "What is the 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 from 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 poisons milk. (107)

Despite the fact that Mistry is critical of some leaders of the National Congress of India, he is attracted to the attitudes of many leaders. The purpose of depicting his memory of the speeches of such leaders is to convey the message that Hinduism is spoilt due to the prevalence of the notion of untouchability. This is, indirectly, a way of resisting to the caste system of Hinduism thereby advocating for equality among Indians – especially, empowering the marginalized sections of the society.

Mistry's *A Fine Balance* provides more space on the memory of Internal Emergency under Indira Gandhi's notorious rule. Rajaram is the hair collector and when he converses with Ishvar about the disappearance of the hair of the beard of the Prophet from the Hazrat Bal mosque in Kashmir, he further memorizes: "The sacred hair disappeared one day, and there were big riots. Everyone was saying the government should resign, that the politicians must have something to do with it. To cause trouble, you know, because Kashmiris were asking for independence" (174). Here, Rajaram's evaluation of Indira Gandhi's government is indirectly stated. For Rajaram and other common people, the politicians knowingly create such problems in

order to manipulate one group against of another thereby maintaining their benefits. Emergency brings problems one after another in the lives of Ishvar and Omprakash. As they are staying in a *jhopadpatti*, it becomes very difficult for them to get the ration cards. When they approach for it they get the reply from the officials that they are supposed to arrange themselves for their vasectomy in order to get the ration cards.

Living in a foreign country, that is Canada, Mistry remembers the cruelties brought up by the Emergency in India. His characters suffer a lot due to the Family Planning Program. When an official orders Ishvar to bring his Family Planning Certificate in order to get the ration cards, he remembers his previous life in village and utters, "Oh, but I don't have that. In our native place there was a fire in the hut. Everything was destroyed" (177). Ishvar remembers the traumatic event of his family's destruction by Thakur Dharamsi. He and his nephew, Omprakash, are deprived of a proper moaning and burial of their family members' death. Mistry has the intention of resisting to the cruel government that imposes restrictions to the common people in order to get their citizen rights, that is, Ishvar has the full right to get the ration cards. When the institution which has the responsibility to save the lives and properties of common people becomes itself atrocious, in such circumstances there is the maximum possibility of arising resistance from every corner of the society. Mistry advocates for such inevitable resistances from the marginalized people of India.

A Fine Balance depicts the cruelties of the government during the Emergency in such a manner that anyone's anger may increase against the authority. For instance, Ishvar becomes furious against the authority when it tries to sterilize his nephew, Omprakash; Mistry narrates his anger in this way:

> "Nussbandhi, he says!" seethed Ishvar. "Shameless bastard! For a young boy, nussbandhi! Someone should cut of the ugly rascal's pipe while he is meditating!" He fled down the corridor, down the stairs, and out through the building's main door. (178)

The authority under the Emergency treats the common people as inhuman creatures. Any government is responsible for safeguarding the health of its citizens, but Emergency prepares for sterilizing the youths of India in the name of reducing population. Thus, Mistry is critical to this cruel nature of government under the Emergency. One of the remarkably resisting characters in the novel is the proofreader, Vasantrao Valmik who utters, "Maybe if everyone in the country was angry or upset, it might change things, force the politicians to behave properly" (229). Valmik hopes for a kind of change in the country, but for that everyone should be united against the cruel activities of the government. In presenting this character, Mistry has the intention to urge the common people to unite for justice and equality. Furthermore, Valmik has the view that we cannot draw lines and compartments and refuse to budge beyond them. He utters, "You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair" (231). Here, Mistry is hopeful for a prosperous India although the Emergency has brought corruption and cruelty depriving the people of their right to live a happy life.

In one of the episodes, The Prime Minister addresses a huge mass. Among the people attending the meeting, Ishvar and Omprakash refuse to clap their hands. They start playing cards, while "the features of the new Twenty-Point Programme were outlined" (265). Mistry might have seen this sort of activities during the period of Emergency in reality. Thus, he narrates the event remembering the forms of resistances shown by the common people. Sometimes people can resist the authority

through their deeds or activities instead of speaking against it. Here, Mistry has focused on the silent form of resistance his characters show towards the notorious Emergency. Dina, a Parsi woman resists from her side by her words, "Government makes laws without thinking" (304). By here, Mistry considers that the laws during the Emergency are made in order to harass the common people in the name of beautification, sterilization, and democracy.

The last category of memory of Partition which has been interpreted beforehand giving emphasis on Ashraf and his family during the Hindu-Muslim riots can be rejoined by analyzing other characters' memories. The memory of Maneck's father, Farokh Kohlah, in which he remembers about his land is related to the memory of Partition. Mistry narrates Farokh's memory as:

> But long before that eagerly awaited birth, there was another, gorier parturition, when two nations incarnated out of one. A foreigner drew 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. (205)

Here, Farokh Kohlah remembers how he loses all of his land. Before partition, he used to live in Pakistan, but at present he lives in the mountain in India. There are many people like Farokh Kohlah who are compelled to leave their land of birth due to the notorious Partition. Mistry, through this character's memory, tries to show how the foreigners, that is, the Britishers drew the line of India and Pakistan border. Farokh Kohlah's business, lands, factories, etc. have been left in Pakistan for which he starts a new business of homemade soft-drink. Mistry might be hinting on the reality how

prosperous people turn into poor due to the massive transference of population during the Partition.

Brigadier and Mrs. Grewal are Farokh Kohlah's closest neighbors. They talk about the bygone Partition bringing out of their memories. Mistry narrates: "They anatomized the Partition, recited the chronology of events, and mourned the senseless slaughter" (209). Those who are the victims of Partition replay their traumatic memories time and again. This telling and retelling of their memories allows them to neutralize their traumas – their individual memory gets the opportunity to transform into collective memory. Avishai Margalit, while clarifying the impact of memory points out, "memory breathes revenge as often as it breathes reconciliation" (5). Mistry, too, in his *A Fine Balance*, is found to be conscious about the impact of memory. When memory comes in the form of revenge, it may become detrimental to the entire society. On the other hand, when it comes in the form of reconciliation, it helps to forget the bygone enmity and create a harmonious relationship between the hostile groups. Thus, Mistry seeks for reconciliation for which he brings a balance between history and memory in his novel.

IV. Conclusion

This study has laid its emphasis on the relation between memory and history considering memory as the reliable source of history. It has analyzed Mistry's *A Fine Balance* as a historical novel; this novel is narrated out of the personal memories of the narrator as well as the individual memories of the characters which have given birth to a historical memory. Within this historical memory lies the facts and fiction of caste violence, Partition violence, and the State-of-Internal Emergency. This study has focused on Mistry's reliance on identity of the marginalized people, untouchability and its notorious impacts in India, and memory as a form of resistance. This study has linked memory with identity in order to fill up the gaps existing in the national historiography of India. By this, it has concluded that Mistry's reliance on memory endeavors him to create a pluralist, anarchist critical history. Challenging the national historiography of India, Mistry's project has created an alternative history from the perspectives of the marginalized people – Chamaars, Darjis, Parsis, and Muslims.

This study has stressed on Mistry's maintaining of balance between memory and history in such a manner that the weaving of inter-religious solidarity comes to the forefront thereby challenging Casteism. The identity of the Chamaars and Darjis is linked with the identity of the Parsis and Muslims. All of these communities are compelled to suffer the cruelties of caste system, particularly, untouchability. Parsis and Muslims are against of the cruel cast-constrain. The memory of caste violence may arouse one's own demand of identity sometimes by energizing revenge and at other times by bringing a state of harmony through reconciliation. This study has argued that Mistry, through his novel, desires to bring a kind of reconciliation among the communities of India. Thus, he relies on the fine balance between revenge and reconciliation. However, Mistry's characters are found to be resisting in a silent mode;

the resistance can be found in their memories of past events. This study has argued that Mistry cannot rely only on historical facts. At the same time, it seems as if it is impossible for him to rely on his and his characters' memories. Thus, he seeks to maintain a balance between memory and history such that he can create a new memory, that is, a new critical history in order to give voice to the marginalized people and communities of India.

India's national historiography gives a little interest in the memory of Partition violence. This study straightforwardly has argued that Mistry has displayed a justice to the memory of Partition violence by juxtaposing memory and history in a balanced manner. India's national hisotriographers have excluded the memories of the Partition victims considering memories as lowly things to be included in history for they are unreliable. However, this study has focused on Mistry's reliance on the imagination and memory of his characters and his own. Mistry's project has raised the issues of identity and untouchability; this study has argued that Mistry has the hope of a prosperous India in which every community will achieve its dignity thereby throwing aside the cruelties of caste-discrimination. Thus, this study has stressed that Mistry is conscious of the fact that Indian history covers only the glorification and accommodation of the national authority and it lacks the details of the plurality of the past. History is to be created out of the details of the plurality of the past such that it tends to become an inclusive history. However, Mistry has the intention of creating an alternative history; therefore, he includes the language of resistance through his memory and his characters' memories. Mistry is critical of the tendency of the national historiographers to consider the deaths of the victims of Partition violence, that is, Hindu-Muslim riots as numbers and statistics.

In order to create a new alternative history, as this study has suggested, Mistry's project has covered a vast area regarding the memory and history of the notorious Emergency under Indira Gandhi's regime in the 1970s. Mistry's critique of the authoritative ruling of the Prime Minister, as this study has stressed on, depends on the inter-play between facts and fiction in order to show a fine balance between memory and history by giving emphasis on his memory, imagination, and his characters' memories so that he can sympathize with the problems and tensions of the marginalized people of India living in a foreign land. In other words, this study has centred its emphasis on Mistry's motive behind depicting the narrative of the atrocities of the Emergency is to criticize it so that he can associate himself with the common people. Thus, this study has argued that Mistry's project of depicting the memory and history of the Emergency has to do with creating a more egalitarian history forming a balance between hope and despair; this is also the apparent reality of India.

More than this, this study has helped us to understand the impacts and effects of the cruelties of the national authority, for example, the impacts of the Emergency to the common people, the impacts of the caste violence, and the impacts of the Partition violence (Hindu-Muslim riots and population transference). It has, at the same time, focused on author's position and stated that Mistry is aware of the political turmoils ongoing in contemporary India directing his authorial sympathy to the marginalized people of India through his characterization covering the overall problems of the downtrodden people. However, this study has not suggested that Mistry's history is an all-inclusive history. It is customary to assume that Mistry has created a partial history basing on memory of the sidelined and subdued communities of India, for example, the plural pasts of the Chamaars, Darjis, Parsis, and Muslims. Moreover, this study has analyzed the Beautification Program, Sterilization Program, and the killings of the

students and teachers during the notorious Emergency. It has also assumed that Mistry might have read these sorts of atrocities in the contemporary newspapers in order to create a pluralist anarchist history of India.

This study has established that a new critical history relying on the memories of the plurality of the past can be created in order to invite the subdued people to raise their voices seeking and demanding their identity and representation in the national affairs and historiography, too. The tendency of exclusion increases the levels of enmity between and among the communities which may bring disharmony in the country as that of the violences perpetrated during the Partition. This study has focused on Mistry's reliance on the belief that tolerating authoritative brutality and discriminations of all kinds does not solve the deep-rooted problems. Instead, there should be the mixture of revenge and reconciliation; however, revenge should be less emphasized than reconciliation as this may bring a new disharmony which is detrimental to all people and communities. By this disharmony, the victims will be doubly victimized and their identities and representations may not come true.

This study has stressed that Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, to some extent, gives emphasis on the contradiction embedded within the culture itself. This might have arisen as the result of an interplay between promises and commitments of the past and reality of the present – which has to do with memory as memory brings past, present, and future in the same platform. There is the tendency of exhibiting keen interest on the recent past than the remote past by the writers of the successive generations. This is also a seminal and phenomenal departure from tradition. More than this, this study has argued that cultural patterns find internalization and adaptation within the stories of the individuals; it signifies that Mistry's novel is a synthesis of culture and history.

As the author himself is sensitive to history, he portrays the major intellectual, cultural or political problems of his own time.

Finally, this study has established that the formation of alternative histories of the excluded establishes a pluralist anarchy and, at the same time, it also recreates the nation it belongs to. In other words, this study has established that the interplay of fact and fiction, that is, history and imaginative memories may provide an extra vigor to create an alternative history. Mistry's project presents histories from a writer's point of view that tries to expose the suppressed or excluded contents of Indian history. His endeavor of narrating and re-narrating history has empowered him to construct his story of his community and nation by taking several cues from his as well as the characters' memories. Thus, this study has shown the partnership between memory and history thereby challenging their rivalry.

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