

Tribhuvan University

Memory and History in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

A Dissertation

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Deepak Mishra completed his thesis entitled **Memory and History in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*** under my supervision. He carried out his research from March 2011 to May 2013. I, hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled "Memory and History in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Deepak Mishra in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of M. Phil. in English has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research focuses on the relationship between memory and history in Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. It studies the issues such as identity, untouchability, marginalization, and resistance. In order to deal with these issues, this research adopts the argument of Allan Megill in which he argues that "memory is valorized when identity is threatened." Moreover, this research relies on Margalit Avishai's belief that "memory breathes revenge as often as it breathes reconciliation" in order to maintain a fine balance between revenge and reconciliation. In other words, this research focuses on Mistry's maintaining of balance between memory and history in his novel by narrating the memory and history of caste violence, Partition violence, and the atrocities of the State-of-Internal Emergency under Indira Gandhi's regime in the 1970s that had been discarded by historians as an unreliable and distorting source. This research stresses that memories are the important factors in the reconstruction of past events.

In addition, this research emphasizes on Mistry's maintaining of the balance between memory and history thereby giving focus on the personal memories of the characters and the narrator in order to create a pluralist critical history, that is, an alternative history from the perspective of the marginalized section of Indian society through his novel. It also deploys memory to be a form of resistance to the national authority and historiography of India thereby creating an alternative history. Although many critics interpret this novel as only a historical novel, this research encompasses the importance of memory in creating an alternative history. This research 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 helps us to understand the status of the Parsis, Chamaars (untouchables),

Muslims, beggars, etc. of the rural and urban India. Finally, it 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; Mistry sympathizes with the marginalized and subdued people of India by creating an alternative history by blending memory and history in a balanced manner.

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