

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PORTRAYAL OF EMERGENCY

IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S

A FINE BALANCE



How much I have lost, in describing the circle.

Ambition, solitude, words, eyesight, vocal cords.

Infact, that is the central theme of my life story-loss.

But Isn't it the same with all life stories? Loss is essential.

Loss is part and parcel of that necessary calamity called life.

- Rohinton Mistry

5.1 Introduction :

Literature is an expression of life. It criticises the life and also reflects the social surrounding of the writer's time. It is the mirror of life. The literary creation of the Indian is widely recognized in the western world. But the literature of the Indian diaspora in Canada has its own significance.

Many of the South-Asian immigrants during British Raj and after Independence settled in western countries. The immigrants during the British Raj were mostly illiterate; they created oral literature. While immigrants after Independence were highly qualified and the decade of their immigration may be called the golden-rush period. Rohinton Mistry and Bharati Mukherjee are two of them and are well-known Canadian writers of the Indian diaspora.

5.1.1. Rohinton Mistry – a Parsi writer :

Rohinton Mistry, a Parsi Zoroastrian is doubly alienated from his ethnic roots, first from Iran as his ancestors were forced into exile and

then, he himself left India. Hence, he experiences the feeling of double displacement which is also reflected in his writings. In the case of the Parsi writers, the post-colonial concern for cultural autonomy and repossession of history is added to the need to obtain a distinct identity and to recall the ethno-religious characteristics of the parees. Rohinton Mistry has said that when the parees disappear from the earth, his writing will 'preserve a record of how they lived to some extent' [Bharucha; The journal of common wealth literature, Vol. XXX; 1995:25] Parsees have confined themselves to non-political professions. Notwithstanding, some notable exceptions, they generally practiced political obstinence and neutrality. They were advised by the social leaders like Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeeboy not to get involved in politics. Yet, the Indian parsees may be called one of the important 'Creative Minorities'. They are 'the fossil' of an extinct culture and yet have gone through a remarkable process of internal change in some respects and have influenced, in turn, as active participants, the process of transformation in Indian Society.

In the post-colonial Scenario, the novelists endeavour to postulate their own versions of history, of their people and thereby

reject the traditional history. Hence a novelist shares 'emplotting strategies' with historians.

This is more true of Rohinton Mistry whose work revolves around the detailing of parsi identity and also of how the parsees are learning to cope with the reality of the post-colonial India and how they are coming to terms with their lives in the west.

5.1.2 Works of Rohinton Mistry:

Rohinton Mistry left Bombay for Canada in 1975. Till the date he has published one collection of short stories *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) and two novels *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and *A Fine Balance* (1995) which won the prestigious commonwealth writers prize of 1996.

Tales from Firozsha Baag (1987) marks a journey back to India. The locale of these short stories is a Parsi complex in Mumbai. They could be termed as 'Nostalgic voyage to homeland'. *Such a Long Journey* (1991) is a novel that deals with post-colonial history of India. It is a unique example of fiction based on facts. It is based on

the Sohrab Nagarwala conspiracy case of 1971.

5.1.3 *A Fine Balance* :

Mistry's *A fine Balance* (1995) is a fictional account of historical facts, enhanced by the Indian parsi writer's intimate critical knowledge of the events of history and social background that provides the setting of the novel. The novel is set in the unnamed city (Mumbai), where Mistry weaves together the minute and compelling narratives about four unlikely characters who came together soon after the government declares a 'State of Internal Emergency'. In the tiny flat of Dina Dalal, a parsi widow, two tailors Ishvar and Om prakash Darji and a student Maneck Kohlah are painfully trying to construct new lives which become entwined in circumstances that could have foreseen.

Unlike *Such a Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance* gives popular versions of the real events. It needed to be an Indian- Born and Indian-bred writer to appreciate and evaluate the present situation in India from a sympathetic as well as critical point of view at any given period of time.

5.2 Portrayal of Emergency :

“We seemed to be helpless in the grip of some all-powerful monster our limbs were paralysed, our minds deadened ... The dominant impulse in India was that of fear-pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear; fear of the army, the police, the wide spread secret service, fear of the official class; fear of law to suppress and of prison.”

(Palkhiwala : 1984)

Mistry with his third person view and straight forward comments and criticism has done justice to the theme of the novel. Since the proclamation of Emergency in 1975 India seems to have entered a phase of uncertainty. The period of 19 months was the darkest of all its time. Mistry presents the ignorance of the people towards the political farce played by the higher echelons of power. Their sympathies, views and counter views about Emergency, their happiness and dismay, their dreams and their shattering, tragic and

pathetic struggle to live and the ‘tandav’, cruel dance of destiny which completely ruined their hopes and life has been graphically presented by him.

5.2.1 Proclamation :

Power is always used as a strategy and therefore it is like a “perpetual battle rather than a contract” (Foucault, 1975 : 465), hence the higher echelons of power ensure that their domination is never questioned and challenged. They rule those who are unaware of their rights. Though they seem free, they are made to ignore or be innocent about the power are coming on them. Murders, disappearance, raids, police custody, deaths were the common features during the Emergency of 1975. And people did not protest for they knew it was unsafe to discuss anything which would invite another trouble for them. Hence, they pretended to be ignorant by calling it “One more government tamasha’ (Mistry, 2003:3)

Emergency called by Mrs. Gandhi; served as a helping hand for the upper-class such as industrialists and businessmen; their reactions

were abrupt and they praised Mrs. Gandhi as if she was the goddess who came to their help in hard times.

“Thank God the Prime Minister has taken firm steps, as she said on the radio. We are lucky to have some strong at a dangerous time like this”.

(Mistry; 2003:74)

Mrs. Gupta representing the upper-class has adverse view about the workers unions; she even dislikes Jayprakash Narayan for his ‘Satyagraha’ as she thinks that the Emergency is proclaimed for the betterment of the nation as there will be no strikes. The leaders of opposition were put in jail and Mrs. Gupta thinks that it is the right act and obvious reaction, for no one could stand such situation where the leaders appeal the countrymen to force Prime Minister physically to resign.

“... Some idiot leaders encouraging them, telling police and army to disobey unlawful orders. Now you tell me, how can the law be unlawful? Ridiculous nonsense serves them right being thrown in jail.”

(73-74)

Not being aware of the real cause of JP's movement and unexpected promulgation of Emergency; Mrs. Gupta gives an extreme view against the national leaders behind the bars.

They interpreted the meaning of Emergency according to their benefits as Ministry points out in Mrs. Gupta's words :

“ The Need of Hour is discipline”
that's the Prime Minister's message on
the poster. And I think she is absolutely right.”

(74)

as she sees two of her employees talking and resting for a while.

Mistry here shows how shallow was the thinking level of the upper-class. They welcomed the Emergency just because they could bully the people for their own benefits. It is also seen that people of the southern India were unaware of the fact that Mrs. Gandhi had called out Internal Emergency just because she wanted to stick to the power.

5.2.2 Meetings held by the Prime Minister:

While dealing with the lives of common people in post-Independence, India Mistry achieves a remarkable feat of capturing the social-political turmoil of the Emergency period.

It was obvious that the Prime Minister held meetings and addressed the nation to convince the nation of how it was necessary to call out Emergency as the country was threatened by the internal disturbance. But the gathering of large masses for the meetings was not so easy and for all of these gatherings, audiences were hired from the slums and backward villages by the higher authorities, as Abbas points out,

“Sanjay started his hired publicity ballyhoo
... they promised five rupees per day plus
the privilege of getting a darshan of the
Prime Minister what more could an agri-
cultural wage-labourer expect”.

(Abbas; 1985:20)

A similar situation has been portrayed by Mistry in *A Fine Balance*.

He describes how the buses arrived at the jhopadpatti where Ishvar, and Om prakash Darji resided and how the officials tried to lure the people by saying,

“She sends her greetings and wants you all
to know that she is holding a big meeting
today Everyone is invited to attend.”

(258)

On the mixture of cool and aggressive response from the busy slum life they played a card:

“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)

The card worked, yet they had to force the people to get in the buses. People like Rajaram knew that it was bogus talk, but hardly they could do anything. The two tailors hurried to their work in spite of such offers. They were surprised to see the publicity stunt. They wondered,

“if the Prime Minister knows they are
forcing us”.

(259)

And, the whole nation knew,

“ She only knows important things,’
said Rajaram. ‘Things her friends wants
to know”.

(259)

Omprakash, Ishvar, Rajaram and others like them were forced into the
buses and were taken to the place of meeting. The buses were loaded
with,

“... Unemployed day-labourers some
women and children and handful of injured
dockyard mathadis.”

(259)

Rajaram in the bus assured Omprakash and Ishvar of great
entertainment without payment. When they arrived they looked for
breakfast and tea. Every person was enjoying their games, sitting over
there and trying to make new acquaintances. They enjoyed the big
showbiz of the officials there. No one was interested in listening to the
Prime Minister,

“Rajaram took out a coin and began playing
Heads and Tails with Om. Around them
People were making new friends ... as far as
They could go.”

(263)

Mistry has well drawn the performances of the leaders during
the time :

“... We understand the truth and we have
come to listen our leaders ... observe;
wherever the Prime Minister goes,
thousands gather from miles around to see
her and hear her. Surely this is a mark of a
great leader”.

(263)

Mistry has well painted the Prime Minister addressing her
audience, with all the minute details of her style when she introduced
and talked about Twenty-Point Programme

“There is nothing to worry about just
because the Emergency is declared. It is
necessary measure to fight the evil forces,
it will make things better for ordinary
people, only the crooks, smugglers,
the black marketers need to worry

.....

what we want to do is provide houses for the
people enough food ... we promise that we
will eliminate poverty from our cities and
towns and villages”.

(265)

With the end of the meeting and the day, people remembered no
promises nor they praised PM’s Speech; but the great show turned as
a big boomrang. They enjoyed the unexpected accident which created
a great mockery for them and also the causalities caused by the falling
of PM’s giant poster on them. For Dina Dalal, it was none of he
business; even it was so with Ishvar and Om, because they wanted
normal life in their own ways and they had their own worries.

5..2.3 Detentions :

The power play as Mistry shows is responsible for tension and violence in the society. Mistry feels that every sort of atrocity had been committed during the Emergency and *A Fine Balance* is the stark and unsparing portrait of the period. While rounding up the fundamental rights of the people, new axe of MISA was introduced with which anybody could be imprisoned without trials.

Mistry gives details about how in this scenario, one arm of the law- the police were actively involved in the process.

‘Gathering crowds for political rallies ...
Rounding up MISA suspects ... demolishing
hutment colonies, vendors’ stalls, jhopad-
patt is ... dump pavement dwellers in waste
land outside the city ... the police perform-
ing their task efficiently, prodding, poking,
kicking.’

(322)

MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Amendment) was the new toy to play with. The persons on the high posts, the upper-class, used MISA for their own vested interests and revenge. In this context Mistry refers to the tragic jailing of Nawaz, the tailor who initially sheltered Ishvar and Om when they came to the city. In response to Ishvar's amazement at the innocents being jailed, the tea-stall owner replies –

‘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)

But this is only one side of the coin. Mistry also shows the humanitarian spark somewhere alive in the stone hearted officials. Sergeant Kesar is one such person. He is trying to be loyal to his duty though he does not approve of it just because of his family; he fears for his job too. But he is also waiting for a chance to punish the real criminals. He awaits and seizes the opportunity when he,

accompanied with two goondas, came to evacuate Mrs. Dalal's flat. As soon as the goondas hold the stolen and hidden plaits of beautiful long hair, Sergeant Kesar arrests them under the case of prima facie case i.e. murder of two beggars. When Dina Dalal points out for evidence and calls it unlawful, Kesar says,

“Don't worry about that. As you were saying earlier, silly things like evidence are not necessary anymore. Nowadays, we have nice things like Emergency and MISA ... very convenient. Allows detention without trial, upto two years. Extension also available on request”.

(570)

Mistry here broods over the pitiable condition of law and courts during the Emergency Raj.

5.2.3.1 University Campus :

During Emergency Indians were under surveillance. Mistry subtly describes how each and every person was suspected and

investigated. Through the world of Maneck and his friend Avinash, Mistry peeps into the Indian academic world during the raj. He describes the evils on Indian University Campus. The terrifying ragging, nepotism in staff hiring, special privileges of politicians; families, government interference in the syllabus, intimidation of faculty members and student politics on the campus is focused.

'The student fervently believed their example would inspire Universities across the country to undertake radical reform, which could complement of the grass-roads movement of Jayprakash Narayan that was rousing the nation with a call of return to Gandhian principles.'

(243)

While surveying the University Campus through Maneck and Avinash, Mistry points out how students became aware of their rights and opposed or praised and supported the Prime-Minister with their own views.

“On campus, a new group, students for Democracy ... 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. The police are now a permanent presence, helping to maintain the new and sinister brand of Law and order”.

(246)

The University teachers who chose to denounce were arrested under MISA, and no one could ever think of interfering in it, as it would cost his own imprisonment. Mistry cites the example of Avinash and two professors to describe how the students and the teachers who voiced against and were never heard of again. We learn how government with its power wanted to end the possibility of further opposition.

‘One morning, classes were cancelled and a flag-raising ceremony was organized ...

Attendance was compulsory ... appealed
the authorities to come forward, prove
their love for the country ... on cue,
lecturers, associate professors, full
professors ... obediently signed statements
saying they were behind the Prime Minister,
her declaration of Emergency, her goal of
fighting the anti-democratic forces threaten-
ing the country from within'.

(247)

5.2.3.2 Punishment :

In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry deals with the excesses of Emergency. It is a thorough survey of power politics played in India for 19 months. The severity of the punishment that one can get who opposes the Emergency cost one's life. Avinash is the best example that Mistry has drawn. Avinash the leader of student union, suddenly disappears which worries Maneck. Avinash's death remains a mystery and the burns on the shameful parts of the body reveal that he did not fall off a fast train but it was the case of student politics and wrongful

death in police custody. His parents tell Maneck,

“ They told us the body was found ...
They said he must have been hanging
from the door ... burns on many shameful
parts of his body ... his fingernails were
gone .. They said anything can happen”.

(499)

Here, Mistry has finely woven the tragic murder case of the engineering student Rajan, during the Emergency. Avinash's sisters had to commit suicide to save their father from humiliation and social scorn for not being able to provide them respectable doweries for marriage.

5.2.4 Beautification :

People were unaware about the coming mishaps during the first phase of Emergency. But as the time wheel turned on and on the nation started getting shock after shock. The people who called it a government tamasha, and claimed that it had nothing to do with their lives soon realised the tragic mistake of taking it lightly. Those were

the common people who were more affected by the Emergency. The new law of Beautification passed by the government brought tears in the eyes of people. Mistry's heart rendering narration has brought lively picturisation of this event which resembles even the most tragic and pathetic Turkman Gate incident. Such demolitions of entire slum and its rubble in areas such as Turkman Gate was not a surprise in the Emergency. Here Mistry has focused on the inhuman, cruel treatment of the people living in jhopadpattis. It is one of the many atrocities unleashed during the Emergency. Ishvar and Om try to assemble their lives again. Their shelter was demolished by the new rule of Beautification of the city. Their dreams and courage for daily struggle to achieve their goals were bulldozed. All of a sudden, the slum turned an eyesore and illegal. From Rajaram, the hair-collector, Ishvar and Om learn that the hutment dwellers were tricked into leaving their huts and also there was heavy lathicharge.

'They tricked us. Sent by the government ...

But once the colony was empty,

the big machines went in'.

Most of the bulldozers were old

Jeeps and trucks, with steel plates

and short wooden beams like
battering rams affixed to the front
bumpers. They had begun tearing into
the structures of plywood, corrugated
metal and plastics ...'

People were crushed. Blood everywhere.

And the police are protecting those murderers ...

The new law says the city must be made beautiful."

(295)

The poor were rendered homeless in the new law of beautification of the city. The friend turned foe by stealing his own friend's possessions. Mistry shows how the power play was responsible for the 'violence from above' in the politically frustrated scenario of 1975.

5.2.4.1 Free Labour and Exploitation :

With the demolition of slums, the people had to end up by making the pavements their homes. Ishvar and Om with other pavement dwellers were rounded up by Sergeant Kesar and were forced to work as unpaid labourers though his soul did not approve of

it. This was not the only load but, hundreds of the pavement sleepers were rounded up and brought to work as unpaid labourers at an irrigation project as part of the city beautification project. They were treated as commodities and not as human beings,

“... The constables stopped laughing and
set on him with their sticks; when he fell,
they, used their feet. ‘Stop, please stop !’
beseeched the facilitator.’ How will he
work if you break his bones ?’
‘Don’t worry, these fellows are tough.
Our stick will break, they wait”.

(324)

Ishvar and Omprakash represent thousands of others who had gone through these terrible nightmares. Their attempts to live life with some dignity were frustrated.

Even the oldest lady and the blind beggar were compelled to work. Babies sucking at the breasts of their mothers were forced away. Such was the pathetic sight.. The authorities were worried only about their commission and how they could pocket more money from

the government and other sources was their interest.

‘The project manager, too, was
delighted with the arrival of new
pavement dwellers. The scheme allowed
him great liberties in manipulating the payroll.
What the free labour lacked in efficiency, it
made up in numbers. The expanding irrigation project
No longer needed to hire extra paid workers’

(357)

The injured were taken to the hospital where doctors were not
efficient and the treatments, the medicines given to them were the
same. Doctors did not inquire about the illness or examine the
injuries; they wanted just to get rid of the patient as soon as possible.

“Before Ishvar could tell Doctor Sahab
what had happened, the white coated
man turned away towards an array of
tubes and bottles. Most were empty;
nevertheless, the display looked impressive.
He selected an ointment while Ishvar,

balancing on one leg, held up his injured ankle to encourage an examination. 'Doctor sahab it's paining over there'. He was told to put his foot down. 'Nothing broken, don't worry. This ointment will cure your pain'.

(358)

The diet given to these labourers was not nutritious and also unhygienic. The supervisors with their greedy eyes stared and harassed the women labourers. The great number of injured and the disabled worried the project authorities. People like foreman and facilitator who sucked every single drop of blood even from the dead body got rid of such disabled labourers by selling them to Beggarmaster and make money out of it.

"The amount was higher than the facilitator had expected. Taking into account the rebate promised to the foreman, he would still make a nice profit".

(364)

Mistry with some addition of minor characters like Rajaram and monkey man tries to lighten the serious tone. Yet, he manages to

present the reality concealed behind the masked glamorous face of the city Mumbai during the Emergency.

5.2.5 Family Planning :

The Most cruel aspect of the Emergency was that anyone young or old, married or unmarried was compelled to undergo family planning operations. In Emergency, it became very usual that each one had to produce a sterilisation certificate even to get a Ration Card. The government workers were allotted the quota of sterilisation and the salary and promotions depended on their promptness in completing the goal.

5.2.5.1 Marketing the Fake Certificate :

The characters like facilitator show how the business of false sterilisation certificates began to grow. Those who could pay the price obtained them. And it was an obvious reaction, for even if a person wanted to issue a Ration Card, he had to choose between food and his manhood.

The ration officer represent thousands of other government employees who exploited the poor to meet their quota of sterilisation.

He says to Ishvar,

“ ‘If you let me arrange for your vasectomy, your application can be approved instantly.

... The doctor I send you to will do it again as a special favour, and give you a new certificate’ ”.

(177)

Here Mistry ironically points towards the helplessness of the government servants and their illogical statements.

5.2.5.2 Struggle for completing the quota:

Cases of family planning excess were legion. The salaries and promotions of the government employees were held up if they did not bring forward a certain number of people to be sterilised.

Motivators were arranged with commission to each person they could lead for sterilisation. Rajaram the hair-collector, for short-time

worked as a motivator and also asked Ishvar and Om to join the job. He told them all persons involved got benefited. Motivator got commission, doctors got their quota filled and patient got gifts from government.

“ ‘In the end, everybody is satisfied’
said Rajaram. ‘Patient gets gifts, I
get paid, doctors fill their quotas. And
it’s also a service to the nation-
small families are happy families,
population control is most important.’ ”

(315)

5.2.5.3.1 Auction for Sterilisation :

Other than motivation, nabbing the people for sterilisation was another method used by people with power, Thakur Dharams; is one of such people. The lives of Ishvar and Om had already been smashed by the fate; Thakur Dharamsi is the villain of their lives, who burnt alive the whole family of Ishvar and Om. The fate gives another final and fatal blow to their lives. The unwarranted police raid on the market place took Ishvar and Om along with other poor villagers

forcibly to the sterilisation camp in the village. Mistry mocks at the situation by painting a character selling potions for impotency and fertility.

People like Thakur Dharamsi thrives there auctioning patients who were nabbed and brought to the clinic because the salary of a government employee was only paid when he produced two or three cases of sterilization.

This is the other grave truth of the tragic period where the grandfather, father and the grandson were sterilised under the mad leash of family planning.

5.2.5.3.2 Discrimination and Injustice :

Thakur Dharamsi is the agent of social repression, letting loose their goons on all those who try to break free from the chains of the caste classification and profession.

Mistry has cleverly shown that vested forcer combined with bureaucracy to perpetuate the status quo under the guise of saving the

nation from population explosion. Thakur Dharamsi uses his position to see that Omprakash is castrated

“Thakurji has quthorized removal as
as special favour to the boy”.
(536)

This is how he takes revenge on the lower castes. The very act of Dharamsi signifies that the trend of criminilisation of politics and politicisation of crime started in the 20th century India during the Emergency Raj.

5.2.5.4 Unhygenic Operations :

The climax of the Internal Emergency comes in the description of ‘Nasbandi Mela’. Here, Mistry sadly describes the callous indifference of the authorities who are more keen on achieving the target within the budget rather than human welfare, the upliftment of the poor. The author shows the insensitive bureaucracy enforcing sterilisation. Operations were conducted with the partially sterile equipments due to the harsh reprimands of bureaucrats who were only interested in targets are were not concerned about human suffering.

“ ‘Instruments are clean enough. How long
do you want to heat the water. Efficiency is
paramount at the Nussbandi Mela, targets have
to be achieved with in the budget.’ ”
(533)

The sterilisation operation in unhygienic conditions caused numerous deaths and the motivators like Rajaram were blamed and thrown out. The doctors were also exploited, as government policy forced them into unethical activities through threats. Therefore they united against victims and refused to take complaints seriously.

5.2.5.5 Positive outlook towards Nussbandi :

Though it was a general view that sterilisation meant taking away femininity and manhood as Ishvar takes it, many of the villagers welcomed it.

‘ I have four children. A year ago I went
to my doctor and had the operation of my own
free will ...”

(535)

One of the women in Mela tells Ishvar,

“ ‘I’m not worried, I’m looking
forward for it. Five children I already have and
my husband won’t let me stop. This way
he has no choice-government stops it. ’ ”

(533)

5.3 Conclusion :

The most common view of the people about Emergency was that it was 'One more political tamasha'. Dina Dalal regards Emergency as 'the government problems – games played by people in power'. She thinks that it would not affect the common people. The upper-class people like Mrs. Gupta, Nusswan are fascinated by the Emergency; it was just like a magic wand for them which could cure all the diseases and decay. The students were euphoric too for various reasons. However at the end, Dina Dalal concludes that 'the roads had turned bumpy'. But Ishvar point out that this is how the world works.

Though Mistry's *A Fine Balance* deals with the merciless political changes cutting through the psycho social fabric of a country where 'justice is sold to the highest bidder, as Mr. Valmik says,

"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 Ministers guilt into innocence".

(562)

It also shows the attempt of the Prime Minister to bring some discipline and some changes in the country which could help in nation's progress. Mistry refers also to the punctuality and discipline during the Emergency Raj :

' I heard that under Emergency
law no ticket means one week in lock up.'

(180)

'They have become very strict
because of Emergency.'

(282)

'The trains are at last running
on time. Because of Emergency.

(302)

Mistry has rightly quoted the Prime Minister's speech and promises for the welfare of the nation, of which few were activated with great zeal :

"What we want to do is provide
houses for the people ... And our
newly formed flying squads will

catch the gold smugglers, uncover corruption and
black money and punish the tax evader who
keep our country poor. You can trust your
government, support Emergency ...” (265-66)

Mistry in *A Fine Balance* has dealt with the excesses of
Emergency at length. The novel offers a Kaleidoscopic view of the
Emergency and gains its effective strength from the perfect mixing of
fact and fiction. *A Fine Balance* is an incredible achievement. It deals
with the truth that needed to be told. This truth embodies the writer’s
consciousness which assesses the tragedy of history. Mistry’s
perception and reaction to the Internal Emergency are never clearly
stated but are conveyed.

Mistry is quite ironic in vision, brooding in tone and
amorphous in reality in Indira Nityanandam’s words –

‘Mistry takes within the purview of the
novel-politics, sociology, religion, economics,
defence’ a patchwork quilt’ in which all
of life is blended into a tragically picaresque novel’.

(Nityanandam; 2002:72)

As in his earlier works Mistry has used parsi rituals and customs as a garnish to the main theme of the novel. Hence, the novel serves as a window to human possibility with particular reference to the forgotten smaller community.

Like Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Attia Husain and Chaman Nahal, Rohinton Mistry too have transmuted facts of history into significant work of art. He has cinematically portrayed the horror and the trauma of Emergency. Mistry evokes 'National Consciousness' rather than 'nationalism' and also gives a humanistic vision towards cultural and political enormities.

A Fine Balance is a faithful account of rendering reality. Mistry draws a vivid picture of the reign of terror that was unleashed in the name of national security and welfare. It is an account of tragic ending of the four lives who trying to cope with the changing political scenario of India. Mistry realistically portrays how protest met with bullets from Avinash's example and how all semblance of fundamental rights of liberty and freedom of expression was utterly

nullified from Om's castration. At last in lawrenian term we can say that Mistry's *A fine Balance* deals with an 'essentially tragic age' and that his vision is marked by pessimism and despair.
