



## Unravelling the Tapestry of Fluid Identity in Mistry's "A Fine Balance"

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### Abstract

This analysis employs Rohinton Mistry's "A Fine Balance" as a case study to examine the experiences and dynamics of the novel's characters within the framework of Marcia's theory of fluid identity. This research examines how James Marcia's identity development theory relates to and contrasts with the idea of fluid identity. The term "identification" is used to describe the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of one's sense of self, which can shift and transform in light of new experiences and relationships, the process of analyzing fictional characters with the intent of learning more about their identities and the influences on those identities. The findings suggest that the characters' identities are fluid, evolving and adapting to suit their situations and personal development. Throughout the story's progression, Marcia's theory provides a helpful framework for understanding how one's identity can be in various stages of diffusion, acquisition, and adaptation. Extrinsic factors such as social expectations, political stability, and economic inequality are discussed. Numerous main characters in this novel face grave sociopolitical and cultural issues in 1970s India. This research aims to reveal the characters' nature, their identification level, and the factors that impact their identity. The results show that the protagonists' identities are fluid, changing, and growing in response to their experiences. Understanding the character's journey in A Fine Balance highlights the dynamic complexity of identity formation and the value of adaptability and openness. The consequences impact the individual. The need to be accepting of and helpful to people going through personality changes is emphasized by the social knowledge of personal development and identity.

**Keywords:** Fluid identity, Development, Dissimilation, Acceptance, Adaptation

### 1. Introduction

The theme of fluid identity in Rohinton Mistry's novel "A Fine Balance" has been overlooked in James Marcia's identity theory. While the novel's identity issues and the characters' evolving sense of self have been examined, Marcia's theory has not been utilized to explore identity fluidity. James Marcia's identity development paradigm, which includes identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement, offers a framework to understand how the novel's characters navigate their changing identities and associated challenges. However, the identity states and behaviors of the characters in "A Fine Balance" in response to various experiences and situations have not been fully investigated. For instance, Dina Dalal's transition from a widow to a mother figure for Ishvar and Omprakash is intriguing. An in-depth exploration of how her new identity influences her decisions and relationships is warranted. Additionally, societal and political influences on character identity development have been neglected. The 1970s in India were marked by political unrest and socioeconomic inequality. Examining how college students like Maneck Kohlah negotiate society's challenges to build their identities will reveal identity's malleability. The novel's identity intersectionality is another possibility. Exploring how characters' caste, religion, and gender identities affect their self-perception and relationships is intriguing part in the study of language used in literature (Gurmani, Latiff, Shahid, Abbasi, & Bhutto, 2022). The literature lacks a complete knowledge of elemental relationships.

Rohinton Mistry is a highly esteemed Indian-Canadian author renowned for his intriguing narrative style and incisive exploration of the human experience. Mistry was born in Mumbai, India, in 1952 and later headed to Canada in 1975, where he maintained his residence in Toronto. The author's writing is strongly influenced by his distinct synthesis of cultural heritages and life encounters, leading to a collection of works firmly grounded in Indian society yet universally appealing to readers around the globe. (Gurmani, Salmani, Shahid, Abbasi, & Ali, 2022; Shahid, Abbasi, & Bhutto 2022)

Mistry's recognized literary achievement is publishing his novel, "A Fine Balance," in 1995. The book is set in the imaginary city of Mumbai during the state of emergency in India from 1975 to 1977. It follows the intertwined lives of four individuals from different backgrounds. The main characters - Dina, a widow who works as a seamstress and faces financial difficulties; Ishvar and Omprakash, two tailors from a lower social class who are running away from persecution; and Maneck, a college student who desires freedom to establish a fragile connection as they navigate the harsh conditions caused by poverty, caste prejudice, and political unrest.

*"Identity is not a static condition but rather an open field waiting to be explored and bargained over."* (Marcia, 1980) and Marcia also argues that growing into one's own is a process that requires a lot of hard work, failure, and self-reflection. That which we call *"identity"* *"is not a fixed quality but rather an ongoing procedure."*

The same concept of a fluid identity is exemplified by characters in "A Fine Balance" by Rohinton Mistry as they battle through many stages of self-discovery to build and maintain a stable sense of self in the face of changing

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circumstances and cultural influences. “*The secret of survival was to balance hope, despair and to embrace change*”.

Rohinton Mistry uses a character's experiences to investigate the idea of a changing self. The story is set in India in the 1970s when the country underwent a profound political and social transformation. Dina, Manek, Ishwar, and Omprakash, the four protagonists, are all unique individuals. The novel's theme of identity change emphasizes how our interactions and experiences continually shape our sense of ourselves.

The story's characters suffer both the economic hardships of industrialization and the social injustices stemming from the symbiotic relationship between dominance and power. According to Guleria (2020) Mistry's “A Fine Balance” sheds light on the problem of gender-based discrimination in which women were enslaved under patriarchy. Manek had a hard time settling on a single persona. His mind was all over the place, his spirit drifting aimlessly. A comprehensive sense of self encompasses a set of objectives, principles, and convictions to which an individual is dedicated. The concept being referred to is the perception and understanding of the continuity of one's self across a period, as well as the acknowledgment of this continuity by individuals other than oneself (Erikson, 1980).’

The novel focuses on Manek's internal conflict over reconciling his Indian ancestry with his desire for a more Western way of life. Second, Dina's thoughts on identity in complex and diverse societies show that individuals can continually adapt and reinvent themselves in light of their experiences. The phenomenon of identity development encompasses both individual and social aspects (Adams & Marshall, 1996). Omprakash kept changing the roles assigned to him, and his identity merged and changed depending on who he was watching.” A significant portion of this process occurs throughout adolescence, as cognitive growth enables individuals to form a “theory of self” (Elkind, 1998 as in Galanaki, 2012).

Ishver and Narayan felt like aliens in their land since their caste was more important than who they were as people. Tyler Tokaryk provides a brief but intriguing Bakhtinian reading of the grotesque body in his analysis of Keynesian economics in “A Fine Balance”. Tokaryk (2005) argues that the individual body in Mistry's work is subject to forces that transform it into a perverse analog of the system of development economics. It explores the ambiguity of socially constructed identities via the experiences of Ishver and Narayan as they try to find their footing under India's rigid caste system. Social classes, gender roles, cultural origins, and developmental phases are all muddled in “A Fine Balance” by Rohinton Mistry's portrayal of his characters, all of whom have fluid identities.

## 2. Literature Review

The book “The Novels of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies” by J. K. Dodiya and J. Dodiya (2004) provides in-depth critical analysis of Rohinton Mistry's literary works, offering valuable insights into the themes, characters, and narratives present in Mistry's novels. The authors delve into Mistry's writing style and the socio-cultural influences that shape his storytelling, making it a significant resource for those interested in a comprehensive understanding of Mistry's literary contributions (Muhammed, Abbasi, Gurmani, & Rahman, 2022; Ahmed, Shahid, Ali, Akmal, & Arif 2022; Gurmani, Latiff, Abbasi, Jatoi & Shahid 2023)

Some have said the narrative becomes too grim due to this severe action. However, this is Mistry's way of illustrating how a sensitive member of the middle class, Maneck, came up on the losing end of the effort to strike a balance between hope and despair. As Bhattacharya (2017) stated, characters illustrate the idea of flexible identity and all four primary characters share a sense of dislocation. Maneck is a pivotal figure because his narrative exemplifies the far-reaching effects of emigration (Kapadia, 2017). There are two distinct movements in Manek Colah. He, like Om and Ishwar, must run away. The move to Bombay represents a radical change in lifestyle from rural to urban. After absorbing the capitalist outlook of the Community, Manek moves from Bombay to Dubai. In the final paragraph, Manek uses the phrase “many big hotels” to depict Dubai as a Sikh taxi driver. However, Mistry does more than that; he also develops his subjects philosophically and through intertextual references. Once again, it is not cultural specificity that matters but rather universality. The right frame of mind is essential for maintaining equilibrium. In other words, you will need to learn to accept the fact that some things cannot be changed and must be accepted. An attitude of equilibrium as acceptance can deal with loss, change, loneliness, and death. It is true that loss is an integral part of the inevitable calamity called life. However, in the novel's context, equilibrium is about more than just accepting one's lot in life. Pursuing equilibrium requires active participation and intends to counteract the causes of hopelessness. The concept of survival distinctly marks Devi and Srividhya (2021) Mistry's humanism. The aspirations and objectives of his main characters are closely connected to a mixture of optimism and sorrow regarding the state of the world. Altaf et al. (2023) discussed the idea of fluid identity in “A Fine Balance”. Victims of forced sterilization in India provide insight into the country's sociopolitical crisis of the 1970s and '70s. His protagonists, for instance, face regular difficulties. Loss of loved ones, financial ruin, and marital strife are all factors.

Mistry's works also often deal with the protagonist's quest for self-discovery. His treatment of the female character Dina in “A Fine Balance” demonstrates this. His ability to portray a woman's mental state, expectations, struggles, and yearning for independence are all on full display in his story. The review titled “Displacement, Space, and Identity in Postcolonial Novels” aims to explore the concept of personal continuity and coherence and the

integration of one's inner self with the external social environment. The concept pertains to the perception of possessing personal investment in one's well-being and a vested interest in a supportive social group. The concept of identity in language encompasses diverse interpretations and viewpoints that extend beyond the realms of human and societal dimensions, encompassing historical and cultural factors (Ambrose & Lourdasamy, 2022; Abbasi, Shahid, & Shah 2022; Shahid, Abbasi, & Asif 2022; Akmal, Shahid, & Ahmed 2022; Shahid, Asif, & Muhammad 2022)

### **2.1. Research Objectives**

The purpose of this comparative study is to analyze the dynamic identity,

1: To compare and contrast identity struggles and personality changes in “A Fine Balance”, emphasizing the influence of social norms, cultural traditions, and historical events.

2: To Analyze the effects of identity development stages and identity fluidity on self-awareness and relationships with others.

### **2.2. Research Questions**

1. How do stages in Marcia's theory emphasize individual action in identity construction fit with fluid identities formed by external pressures and social/cultural changes?

2. How can fluid identities enable good development and mental health strategies that encourage individual expression and adaptation in a fast-changing world?

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

James Marcia's identity formation theory can be used to study fluid identity in “A Fine Balance”. Marcia's theory states that people undergo several identity crises and resolve them before finding a stable identity. This concept can help explain how people balance fluid identities. Marcia's theoretical framework classifies identity statuses as dispersion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement. Identification diffusion occurs when people have not fully examined their identification options, causing bewilderment or doubt. Identity foreclosure occurs when people adopt a single identity without exploring or considering other identities. Identity moratorium is actively exploring and examining multiple identities without committing to one. Engaging and consolidating distinct parts of identity leads to identity attainment. Individuals may constantly explore numerous aspects of their identity within a fluid identity framework to achieve equilibrium flexibility and adaptation. Instead of rigid identities, people may pick a variety of identities that can adapt to different situations. Identity fluidity helps people adapt and prosper in many social, cultural, and personal circumstances.

However, maintaining a precise balance between fluidity and stability is crucial. Fluidity in experiences and viewpoints can foster inquiry and personal growth. It is crucial to recognize that this flexibility may hinder identity formation. This phenomenon can cause perplexity, insecurity, and susceptibility. Conversely, a rigid self-image might limit personal growth and adaptation. Individuals must actively explore and develop their identities to reach a nuanced equilibrium Rafique, Waqas & Shahid, 2023; Shahid, Sabeen, & Sonia, 2024; Sonia, Shahid, Gurmani 2023).

James Marcia's identity formation hypothesis underpins fluid identity in fine balance. Marcia's four identity statuses explain identity fluidity through exploration, commitment, and balance between stability and flexibility. Understanding how humans maintain “A Fine Balance” in their evolving identities requires considering external circumstances.

### **4. Analysis of the Text**

Culture, society, family, and peers shape identity. Cultural norms and expectations can determine an individual's perceived restrictions or liberties in expressing unique identities. Social support, approval, or rejection from family and friends may influence an individual's interest in fluid identities. People should be open to new ideas, viewpoints, and identities while staying true to their values. Individuals should regularly reflect, critically evaluate their identities in different settings, and intentionally choose which identities to adopt or abandon when analyzing how people maintain a tenuous balance between adaptability and permanence in their identities. (Ahmed, Shahid, Ali, Akmal, & Arif 2022; (Muhammad, Shahid, & Gurmani 2023).

The work primarily explores the theme of identity, specifically focusing on the characters' cultural displacement, anguish, alienation, and loneliness as different aspects of their identity problem. Mistry engages in a psychological exploration of the inner journeys undertaken by his protagonists. Set in India in the 1970s, the novel focuses on the struggles of its characters as they try to make ends meet amid political instability and economic inequality. The novel explores the significance of maintaining harmony in one's relationships. For Mistry's characters, life is very difficult. They had several difficulties to overcome. Natural impediments exist, and so are those that humans have put in the way. They put in much extra effort overall. While some who believe in fate avoid conflict, others never lose equilibrium. The human race is helpless in the face of fate, which is complex and multifaceted. Mistry's chameleonic nature in the novel reflects the complexity of the human condition and the ongoing struggle to find one's place in a world that demands constant adaptation.

According to Peter Morey, “Existence is inherently unsteady; instead of dividing lines between self and other or past and present lives, the novel endorses balance and pattern.” (Keeble, 2014). Establishing one's identity,

foreclosing on one's identity, putting one's identity on hold, and finally achieving one's identity are the four steps that makeup James Marcia's theory of identity formation. Identity dispersal occurs when an individual fails to investigate and commit to a singular identity, resulting in ambiguity and uncertainty. The story focuses on how the protagonists can change who they are to fit into a new environment. They demonstrate the protagonist's resilience in the face of adversity and the multifaceted nature of one's personality. *"Ishver left the trunk he was packing on the verandah, he came in. He sat on his Bed putting his around him. You know Maneck, human face has limited space. My mother used to say, if you fill your face with laughing, there will be no room for crying"*.

The hopes and heartbreaks of the protagonists are entangled with their loftiest aspirations. Four individuals from diverse backgrounds looking for their place in the world. Dina Dalal, the novel's main character, has been in a state of sorrow ever since. When she was young, both her parents passed away. Like a bird in a cage, her brother closely monitors her. Dina is completely self-sufficient and adores the Smile band. She is unconsolated by her brother's anxiety. She is wed to a wealthy man against her will, but since 1970, composer Rustom Dalal has been her true love. Before she could start a family, her spouse was killed in an accident. *"Densities can function as a point of identification and attachment only through its ability to exclude, lower, and transcend (Ambrose & Lourdasamy, 2022). Due to a sudden emergency in 1975, she had to leave her preparations to her brother. Following societal constraints, Dina's identity as an independent woman crumbled. Dina views him as an oppressor and offers to show her the Zoroastrian tower of silence to dispose of remains. 'Such a mood of disposal of the dead was also a sky burial and enabled the social and eco-conscious Parsi to make their final charitable offering (their bodies to bird) and do so without polluting the earth, water or fire"*.

Through the experiences of these characters, he explores the fluidity of social, cultural, and personal identities, challenging stereotypes and inviting readers to question the fixed notions of society. *"I'll let you in on a little secret: there is no such thing as an uninteresting life." one day you will tell me complete story, unabridged and unexpurgated. we will set aside time for it, and meet. It's very important. Manick smiled, " why is it very important? It's very important because it remind yourself of who you are. Then you can go forward without fear of losing yourself in this ever-changing world"* (Mistry).

The foundation of James Marcia's four stages of personality development is how individuals progress and embrace a new identity. According to Meeus (1996), Marcia conceptualizes identity as a self-constructed and dynamic framework encompassing ambitions, abilities, beliefs, and individual history driven by the ego. The author presented a theoretical framework to elucidate the various mechanisms via which individuals construct their identities. According to Meeus (1996), Marcia's identity state model delineates four distinct identity statuses, which are determined by the extent of exploration and commitment that adolescents are undergoing or have already undergone.

#### 4.1. Identity Foreclosure

One important aspect of James Marcia's identity theory is the concept of identity foreclosure which refers to a person who recognized his identity early without various tests or possibilities. Much of the identity work we do in adolescence and young adulthood is about values and goals, as we strive to articulate a personal vision or dream for what we hope to accomplish in the future (McAdams, 2013). Dinah, a middle-aged widow of the Parsi family, is, at first traditional and rigid personality imposed by social expectations. She follows the intended role of an obedient wife and daughter-in-law. However, as the story progresses, encounters with various characters and Her situation force her to re-evaluate her own beliefs and challenge her character of being excluded

*"Dina felt a pang of sadness every time she thought of her husband, whom she had known for so long but had never truly known." But she didn't linger on such ideas for long; what did it matter? She was now a widow, her identity permanently encapsulated in that single phrase." (Chapter 1)*

Dina, out of duty and obligation, married an abusive and distant man without exploring her desires or seeking a partner who would value and love her. She accepted her role as a wife without questioning, exhibiting identity foreclosure. Identity is seized when Dinah is given an unloved and abusive person. Dina marriages without considering other possible options for happiness or fulfillment. Her marital status completely determines Dinah's character. She does not question or explore other aspects of her life and her husband's death and solidifies her identity as a widow.

*"The pain of her past had buried her true self deep within, and she had escaped into the comfort of her own silence. She had no words left to express her pain, no means to reclaim her lost identity."(Chapter 19) "Dina wondered if it is possible to hold on to a single identity in a world full of contradictions"*.

Identity foreclosure manifests itself in Ishwar and Omprakash's strong attachment to their caste identity. Accepting caste as a source of identity despite discrimination and difficulties. A limited understanding of oneself and the world around them is depicted in firm adherence to social roles determined by the cast. Mistry describes, *'As were born into a caste that destined them to become latrine scavengers. Their societal position leaves no room for exploration or alternative identities. They are trapped in a predetermined role that they cannot escape"* (Chapter 9).

Ishver and Omprakash, despite the harsh conditions of their existence, consistently maintained a strong attachment to their caste affiliation. The above served as a source of stability and a sense of belonging for individuals who

experienced consistent rejection and humiliation within their environment. At the outset, Manek's character undergoes a conflict arising from the disparity between his rural background and the urban lifestyle. This conflict propels him to navigate various social spheres and encounter diverse experiences, ultimately transforming him as he confronts and adjusts his beliefs to endure the challenging reality of urban existence. Manek's lack of diversification in his pursuits is seen in the presence of his lien. In non-academic pursuits, he refrains from exploring alternative options. The individual's perception of their professional identity is limited to that of an engineer due to familial expectations constraining opportunities for self-exploration and introspection.

Rohinton Mistry describes, *'Manek knew he would become an engineer someday because that is what his parents had decided. They had already arranged his future, and hence he felt no need to explore other possibilities'* (Chapter 06)

#### 4.2. Identity Diffusion

The issue of identity dispersal is examined in Rohinton Mistry's novel "A Fine Balance". It is the belief that people might get so disillusioned with their surroundings that they stop being themselves. The novel's characters battle poverty, brutality, and injustice daily but never lose sight of who they are as individuals. They have to make tough choices, which might leave them feeling lost and bewildered. Because of this uncertainty, the characters experience identity dispersal, in which they lack focus and are consequently unable to fully realize their potential. *"She was a street girl, it mauled her. She had become coarse and loudmouthed, all too ready to fight for respect. But sometimes, late at night, when the darkness pressed against her body, she approached the vastness of her own self, the depth of her isolation, and lay awake, unblinking with the wonder of it"* (p. 80)

The protagonist, Dina Dalal, who struggles with the fragmentation of her identity, navigates her life as a widow and her societal position. According to Rohinton Mistry, *'Dina's self-esteem was restored by the money she earned, not only for the relief it brought, but because it gave her a title, a position in society. But she was never quite sure if it made her truly happy. It was a confusing business, this accumulating of status symbols'* (p. 331).

Manek's personality expansion is also demonstrated through his interactions with other characters in the novel, such as Om and Ishwar. These people came from dysfunctional families and faced considerable hardship. Manek's encounters with them lead him to acknowledge his privilege and question his preconceived notions of success and happiness. This clash of identities leaves Manek confused and insecure about his identity and place in the world. The path of self-discovery and exploration of one's values and beliefs contribute to his confusion and insecurity. Manek's struggle to define his identity amidst the chaos and troubles of life in India powerfully portrays the proliferation of identity.

*"Eyes half-closed, they placed their destinies in the hands of the men responsible, the men whose worth each had judged - whether sanely or irrationally, each made the leap of faith that had brought them across the country into this megalopolis of destiny."* (p. 402)

Conflicts between one's social role, society's expectations, and wants are reflected in the characters' experiences in "A Fine Balance". After her spouse dies, she finds it difficult to find her identity outside of conventional gender roles. Consistent with Marcia's view of personality diffusion is the ambiguity and confusion she experiences when trying to define who she is. Identity and complexity are shown to be flexible in "A Fine Balance". According to Marcia's theory of maturation, the characters' attempts to find their identities clash.

#### 4.3. Identity Moratorium

According to Alston (1984) the term "moratorium" refers to a designated timeframe during which an individual is permitted a postponement to finalize a decision or undertake a responsibility. During this particular developmental stage, adolescents commonly encounter a state of crisis characterized by a lack of commitment to specific life choices. As a result, individuals frequently experience feelings of confusion, instability, and discontent. These teenagers frequently engage in rebellious behaviors and display difficult attitudes as a coping mechanism to avoid confronting the anxiety experienced by these individuals who are in a state of confusion. The individual has not yet established a satisfactory sense of identity and is now engaged in an exploratory process to consider several possibilities. According to James Marcia's theory, an identity moratorium explores various possibilities and actively questions their beliefs, values, and future direction. A lack of commitment to a particular identity or life path characterizes this period.

Ishwar and Omprakash, two untouchable tailors, face constant discrimination and social pressure because of their caste. A moratorium on their identity emerges from their relentless search. For autonomy, independence, and self-acceptance in a devalued society. They leave a path of self-discovery and rebellion against social expectations and cultural norms. Derrida and Foucault's Violent Hierarchy (male versus female) are based on the idea that identity is built on exclusion.

Said (2014) argued, *"self is defined less by what one is and more by what is not through a process of othering"*.

The character Manek represents "A Fine Balance" and flexible identity. Manek, a city-based college student, supports James Marcia's identity theory. In "A Fine Balance," Manek is a human figuring out who he is. He studies in the metropolis after growing up in a small area. Manek's mentality changes as he struggles between traditional principles and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Manek experiences social and cultural events throughout the story tests his self-confidence and faith. He fights with his identity while observing the harsh facts of life and the city's

socioeconomic difference. Choose according to world ideals using Maneck's flexibility. His beliefs are regularly questioned. The culture around him is insecure, and he wants to flourish. Finally, Maneck begins "A Fine Balance." It embodies a new personality.

Marcia's theory recommends questioning, learning, and recognizing your identity and life's purpose. *'In his life Maneck has always been outsider, floating between worlds, never truly feeling a part of any. He would often question his own identity, wondering who really, he was and where he belonged'.* Rohinton Mistry (chapter 12)

#### 4.4. Identity Achievement

The narrative dives into the characters' journeys towards personal development and the attainment of self-awareness when their paths intersect.

*"you have to use your failures as stepping stones to success. You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair. In the end, it is all a question of balance."*

Through the various social exchanges and shared encounters, individuals are compelled to confront and critically examine their identities, ultimately leading to a state of identity attainment. Heightened levels of self-awareness, acceptance, and resilience distinguish this condition.

Moreover, the portrayal of the character Ishver Darji exemplifies the notion of identity attainment, which entails individuals exploring several alternatives and ultimately making a firm commitment to their chosen identity. Ishver and his nephew Omprakash are affiliated with the lower social stratum of tailors commonly referred to as the Untouchables. Despite encountering discrimination and adversity, Ishvar exhibits unwavering determination in upholding his professional identity as a tailor, rejecting the notion of allowing his societal standing to shape his sense of self. Demonstrating perseverance and determination, he ultimately attains self-awareness and a clear purpose.

*"They were far from the places where they had taken their first steps as infants, played their childhood games, known their first loves and buried their dead. Now they made a new beginning; they were orphans, they would find friends, they would make a home, they would build a new identity"* (Mistry, 36)

Mistry's work explores the theme of identity achievement through identity transformation when departing from their accustomed surroundings. The individuals actively seek novel social relationships and possibilities to facilitate personal growth and reconstruction. In the face of challenging circumstances, the heroes exhibit resilience and resolve, bolstering their strength and drive. They steadfastly uphold their individuality and actively endeavor to proclaim their unique identities, even in the face of external forces that want to undermine them.

*"They were reminded of their servitude each time they put their feet to the earth, but they were determined not to abandon their public places. They continued to assert their identity. Each day renewing the image of their existence on this planet"* (Mistry, 549).

Author highlights the characters' determination to resist oppression and affirms the individual identity of the characters. Although they face constant reminders of their marginalization, they declare their presence and refuse to be wiped out. Mistry's characters in "A Fine Balance" journey towards identity achievement as they navigate difficult circumstances and seek to establish their sense of self amidst challenges. Despite facing great discrimination and hardship, Dina refuses to be identified by her gender and refuses to conform to traditional roles for women in Indian society.

Dina's persistence in earning and supporting herself challenges fixed intuitions of gender identity and shows the flexibility of roles and expectations. He criticizes her for not fitting into traditional gender roles, but Dina confidently defends her choice by refusing to conform to the demands of her society who wants to make a living by waiting *"I have business to take care of, and I'll do it anyhow, with or without permission from anyone - Dina Dalal (Chapter 4).*

In "A Fine Balance", Mistry discusses the complexity of personal identity and external Influences, social expectations, and personal experiences that shape and redefine the sense of self. A fluid identity reflects the constant struggle to establish and maintain stability. The feeling of being in an ever-changing world is consistent with James Marcia's aspect of identity theory.

*You have seen only the early part of my life...we are made up of parts and pieces, shaped by experience and encounter - Maneck Kahlah (Chapter 9)*

Manek reflects on how his personality has changed and how his encounters and relationships shaped and transformed him. The character of Omprakash, a street beggar, also exhibits a volatile personality. His poor past forces him to adapt and take on other characters to survive in a society often overlooked. Omprakash's ability to switch between multiple personalities highlights adaptability and the ever-changing nature of a sense of self. Omprakash continually adapts his personality to suit different situations and tricks others. These conversations reflect the flexibility of Omprakash's sense of self in adapting to ever-changing circumstances.

*"He wore different disguises as he moved from one territory to another, adopting the appropriate façade and accent - Omprakash (Chapter 16).*

This displays Omprakash's ability to tolerate and adapt to a variety of personalities in order to survive. A world that often dismisses him. This emphasizes his confident agility as his demeanor shifts.

## 5. Critical Discussion

The researcher has explored the concept of identity as portrayed in Rohinton Mistry's novel "A Fine Balance." It explores how various characters in the novel grapple with their identities in the context of cultural, societal, familial, and peer influences. The analysis is comprehensive, touching on different aspects of identity, drawing from both the characters' experiences and incorporating relevant theoretical frameworks, such as James Marcia's stages of identity development.

The analysis effectively highlights the impact of external factors, such as culture, society, and family, on shaping individuals' identities. It recognizes the fluidity of identity and the ongoing struggle to find one's place in a dynamic world. The inclusion of quotes from the novel and references to Marcia's theory adds depth to the discussion. Moreover, the passage delves into specific identity statuses outlined by James Marcia, such as identity foreclosure, identity diffusion, identity moratorium, and identity achievement. The application of these concepts to characters in the novel, such as Dina, Ishwar, Omprakash, and Manek, provides a nuanced understanding of their journeys and struggles in forming and transforming their identities through their expressions (Akmal, Shahid, & Abbasi 2022; Shahid, Abbasi, & Gurmani 2022; Gurmani, Latiff, Abbasi, Jatoi & Shahid 2023)

The inclusion of quotes from the novel strengthens the analysis by offering direct evidence of the characters' thoughts and experiences. For instance, Dina's struggle with her identity as a widow and the impact of societal expectations on her sense of self is effectively illustrated through quoted passages. The passage also effectively connects the characters' experiences with broader social issues, such as caste discrimination and societal expectations regarding gender roles. The discussion of how characters like Ishwar and Omprakash adhere to their caste identity despite facing discrimination adds a layer of complexity to the analysis (Shahid, Ong, Teck, & Perveen. 2019; Razaq, et al., 2023; Mukhtar, et al., 2023; Khan, et al., 2023; Mukhtar, Ahmad, Mukhtar, Shahid & Javed, 2023).

Furthermore, the passage incorporates relevant scholarly perspectives, such as Peter Morey's idea that "existence is inherently unsteady" and the notion that identity is shaped by exclusion. These references contribute to a more comprehensive exploration of the theme of identity in the novel. Overall, the passage critically evaluates the use of language to highlight the concepts of identity in "A Fine Balance." It successfully weaves together literary analysis, theoretical frameworks, and real-world implications, providing a rich understanding of how identity is portrayed and explored in the novel by using lucid language (Shahid, Gurmani, & Kalhor, 2023; Sabeen, Shahid & Gurmani 2023).

## 6. Conclusion

In "A Fine Balance," Rohinton Mistry skillfully portrays the fluidity of identity as characters grapple with societal, cultural, and personal demands that shape their sense of self. The novel aligns with James Marcia's identity theory, illustrating multiple identity states and the transformative journey toward a more authentic self-understanding. Rather than seeking a balance between justice and injustice, good and evil, and love and hate, the narrative presents an equilibrium as a mental state, weighing optimism against despair. The concept of fluid identity in the novel underscores the ongoing process of identity formation individuals experience. James Marcia's theory of identity development provides a framework for understanding the various stages and characteristics of this process. Individuals navigate the complexities of their identities, continually redefining themselves in response to new circumstances and experiences, fostering growth, adaptation, and self-actualization. Furthermore, Mistry adeptly navigates the complexities of human relations among individuals of diverse cultural identities. His ability to balance the fantastical and practical aspects of his writing enables him to reclaim the past in a new environment. As identities are not fixed in an essentialized past but subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture, and power, Mistry's work reflects the dynamic nature of identity, shaped by the narratives of the past. This conclusion encapsulates the novel's exploration of fluid identity and the application of James Marcia's theory, as well as Mistry's nuanced portrayal of cultural identities and the dynamic nature of the past in shaping individual identities.

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