

I. Rohinton Mistry and His Realm

This research focuses on Rohinton Mistry's novel *A Fine Balance*. It tries to analyze Mistry's position as Orientalist and also his attitude towards East in relation to the very Yeatsian notion of calm and stoic East. This is the colonial and post-colonial mode of interpretation. It tries to show how Mistry orientalizes the Orient in terms of his representation of the landscape, people and the politics; the theme of resistance and resignation.

Although an immigrant, an outsider in Canadian society, Mistry already understood this condition, for in India he belonged to the Parsi community, whose Zoroastrian religious beliefs set its members on the edge of Hindu society. Most of his stories have little to do with his experience as an immigrant in Canada, but focused instead on the uneventful lives of a group of Parsis who live in a ramshackle apartment block. *A Fine Balance* is his second novel written in 1995, which reached the short list for the Booker Prize and received various awards. *A Fine Balance* treats India both kindly and harshly. Set in the mid 1970s during Mrs. Gandhi's declaration of the state of internal emergency, the book turns towards the survivors in an unnamed city by the sea that resembles Bombay. *A Fine Balance* principally is a tale of four antithetical characters that come together in even more eccentric circumstances. It is a splendid and disturbing tale of the freakish situations that they stomach in the tumultuous epoch of the tempestuous political and social condition.

Mistry, in *A Fine Balance* transfers the historical situations and reality of Indian life into a metaphor that stands for the human experience: the fears, the joys, the ambitions and failures, the terror and conflicts, finally the sense of balance that once attained will allow the characters to withstand the outer world, a world awash

with dangers to personal fulfillment and identity. The novel also raises a few issues like minority discrimination; oppressive totalitarian rule to the extent of mass serializations against the unwilling citizens; and the questions related to communal disharmony and poverty.

Through *A Fine Balance*, the whipping craftsmanship of Mistry's writing comes to fore, and the reader is submerged in a magnimously-dimensioned city and its amusing, queer and funny population replete with their day to day problems. The communal harmony of the four unlikely companions is shattered by the world outside the four walls that enclose and protect them. The invading forces are economic, social and political. Dina struggles to make ends meet and to fill the demands of the export company. The two tailors, just when their lives have taken on some order, return to their village for wedding and fall victim to India's cruelest social constraint: the caste system. Although Manek's problem seems self-imposed or a result of his overdrawn sensibility, he finally commits suicide. At the end the tailors survive as beggars on the street and one of them is turned into a eunuch as village retribution for his arrogance in defying caste system. Dina, after her failure in the business is sentenced to her brother's home as a domestic drudge. Every afternoon she secretly provides meal for the men who worked for her in the better days.

A westerner's understanding of the East as an antithesis of tragedy seeps into the novel, offering an almost mystical alternative to the bleak political and social landscape the book surveys. In the certain sense, an image of eternal India, already familiar to western readers is re-evoked, but this time through Yeatsian eyes. The main theme of the novel is resistance and resignation that the characters are always hopeful and tolerant after the encounter of every misfortunes and horrifying circumstances, and which Mistry shows by making them polar opposite of Avinash,

the student activist who struggles against the emergency rule's tyranny and pays for his inability to accommodate, with a painful death.

Mistry brings into his novel a very Yeatsian notion of East, one that orientalizes the text and imbues it with a stoicism which does not always find itself in harmony with the novel's uncompromising depiction of injustice. So it can be taken as a Canadian book about India or the Eastern scenery drawn by a western artist. Even though Mistry seldom goes back to India literally now days, he does persist in taking literary journeys. Asked if this dependence on memory, rather than reality causes problems in fictional re-creation of India, Mistry explains:

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. (Smith, 65)

Mistry catches the city's squalid side, the poverty, disorder, filth and ruin, the chaos, but at the same time engage its immense vitality and diversity.

Mistry's writings are not primarily concerned with domestic and sexual relations. They raise questions about social, political power and ethics. According to David Townsend, *A Fine Balance* can be described as "a sad novel"(144) that manages to balance the conflicting forces: that is, the outside world and the inner sphere. He says: "Its private dimensions are merely weighed against political circumstance; they are revealed as the personal manifestations of the same reality" (145). *A Fine Balance* creates an enduring panorama of the human spirit in an inhuman state. Initially distrustful of one another, the characters gradually build

loving, familiar bonds and learn together to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair in a society that suddenly turns inhumanly cruel and corrupt. In spite of the torture inflicted upon them from different sides, the characters seem hopeful for a balanced life till the very end of the story.

Robert L. Ross, while writing about the thematic aspect of the novel, opines it as “a fine balance between hope and despair” (236). Mistry blurs all the demarcations to show the struggle of people in tempestuous social and political condition. Ross further says: “Mistry’s novel, in its development of time- honored fictional ingredients [. . .] setting, character, style and plot seeks and maintains a delicate balance and that balance leads into subtle thematic implications” (242). Adaptation and accommodation are the major qualities in Mistry’s characters, which make them the representatives of the stoic and calm east. Here, Mistry seems to follow Irish poet W. B. Yeats’s conception of East as an antithesis of tragedy. For Yeats East has its solution always therefore knows nothing of tragedy. Mistry presents the lawyer as a secular guru: being the only intellectual in the book that quotes Yeatsian lines to show how Orientals are able to cope with all kinds of situations.

Abdulrajak Gurnah calls *A Fine Balance*, “a distinguished addition to the mythologizing of Bombay” (22). In spite of his wild exaggeration and flights of fancy, Gurnah appreciates Mistry’s skill of using imagination that the story moves outside the secure fiat and beyond the city by the sea into the village of the two tailors and the idyllic mountain home of the student.

For Kaela Jubas, *A Fine Balance* is an investigation of globalization’s rhetoric of promise and connectedness. He says, “Globalization disrupts community and social capital, despite the increasing recognition of their role in supporting lifelong learning” (53).

From the stylistic standpoint, Mistry might be said not to have a style, at least one that is apparent. Ranganath Udupa while talking about Mistry's use of language says, "He writes more in the tradition of old India's English language fiction before Salman Rushdie came along, followed by Arundhati Roy: that is, in a altogether readable, which is to say a simple, direct, refined, conventional manner. Dialogue, in particular, Mistry handles always catching the rhythms of Indian English" (4). In order to represent man's inhumanity to man, language itself has to be inhuman. In this sense the language of *A Fine Balance* also takes a cinematic quality.

A Fine Balance has been acclaimed as a groundbreaking fictional work that celebrates rootlessness and post-colonialism. Amin Malik takes it as "a classic example of Post Colonial realist text" (101). He tries to re-actualize the novel's realist aesthetics and demonstrates how integral this particular aesthetic strategy is to the novel's interpretive Utopian potential as a post colonial literary text.

The central point of the present study is that there is western conception about orient dominant in Mistry's novel or his Orientalist attitude is reflected in his representation of the landscape, people, their suffering and their reaction to it. Placing very disparate quartet into a cramped apartment and chronicling their everyday life in minute detail are what Mistry does best. But the problem is that, though Mistry is an oriental born writer, he is writing under the interpretive shadow of the Orientalist writer sustaining colonial prejudice by maintaining the division between the West and the East. He follows Irish poet's conception of East. Thus he gives continuity to the Orientalist ideology.

The methodology of the proposed study will be based on Said's idea of Orientalism and some other writers of Colonial and Post-colonial Literature.

The present work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter presents a short introduction to Mistry with his relation to Orientalism or specially Yeats, a brief outline of *A Fine Balance*, an introductory outline of the present study, and a short review. It gives a bird's eye view of the entire book.

The second chapter tries briefly to explain the theoretical modality that is going to be applied in this research. It explains shortly the intellectual background of the Colonial and Post Colonial Literature, major trends in colonial and post colonial writings, especially Said's Orientalism and Orientalist position of the writers like Mistry.

On the basis of the theoretical modality outline in the second chapter, the third chapter will analyze the text at a considerable length. It will sort out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study-Mistry orientalizes the orient by presenting India as an anti thesis of tragedy thereby reinforcing the Yeatsian Notion of calm and stoic East.

The fourth chapter is the conclusion of this research. On the basis of textual analysis in the chapter three, it will conclude the explanations and arguments put forward in preceding chapters to show Mistry influenced by the Western concept of East.

Thus this research will give a balanced judgment of Mistry on the basis of the study of his novel, *A Fine Balance*. It will, on one hand show Mistry's Orientalist position, on the other, try to point out how he is influenced by Yeat's notion of calm and stoic East.

II. Post colonial perspective: A Theoretical Modality

The emergence of multiple literary theories has provided us with an ample opportunity to read and interpret a text from different angles and perspective. Since the novel under research describes the social and political situation of the once colonized nation, the issue important here is how the country falls under the similar trap of domination and dependence after the end of colonialism. The term colonialism is important in defining the specific form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last four hundred years. Colonialism involves implanting of settlement in a distant territory by an alien nation. Elleke Boehmer defines the term as in a similar line: “Colonialism involves the consolidation of imperial powers and is manifested in the settlement of territory, indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands” (2). So Colonialism can be defined as a conquest and control of other peoples land and goods.

Though most parts of the colonies have got their independence, many of the dominating imperial attitudes underlying colonial conquest continue. A new form of imperialism becomes dominant that can be found in the work of literature. They are trapped into the mazes of ideological and cultural influences.

Colonial literature, though it is difficult to give precise definition because of its heterogeneity, reflects colonial ethos. In general colonial literature exhibits a tinge of local colonial color, or feature colonial motives for example, the quest beyond the frontier of civilization. They exhibit colonial experiences and perceptions and are written from the imperial perspectives. It is, as Elleke Boehmer writes, “informed by theories concerning the superiority of European culture and the rightness of empire” (3). Colonialism reshaped existing structures of human knowledge. No branch of learning was left untouched by the colonial experience. The process was somewhat

like the functioning of ideology itself; simultaneously a misrepresentation of a reality and its reordering. The definition of civilization and barbarism rests on the production of an irreconcilable difference between 'Black' and 'White', self and other. The late medieval European figure of the 'wild man' who lived in forests, on the outer edges of civilization, and was hairy, nude, violent, stoic expressed all manners of anxieties. He and his female counterpart were 'others' who existed outside the so-called civil society and yet they constantly threatened to enter and disrupt this society.

In the heydays of empire, writers felt it necessary to write about new places and people. They began writing about the people who inhabited the lands (empires) they claimed: the natives, the colonized. But the problem was that of truly understanding the alien people, culture, geography and the landscape. They were dumbfounded to see the things in new surroundings, and the attitudes and the behaviors of the people entirely unreadable. Then they began to represent these people and cultures in their own familiar vocabularies, their own metaphors and tropes, and the "strangeness was made comprehensible by using every day names, dependable textual conventions, both rhetorical and syntactic" (Boehmer 14). In this process of defining and renaming the natives, they started classifying them as barbaric and degenerate, either dangerous or alluring. Boehmer again writes: "Classifications and codes imported from Europe were matched to people, cultures and topographies that were entirely un-European. And having once done the work of interpretation, the imported symbols, even if entirely arbitrary, often stuck" (17). This notion of danger was expressed in third depiction of vast and mysterious landscapes, wild jungles and swampy lands.

Colonial writing is important for revealing the ways in which that world system could represent the degradation of other human beings as natural, an innate part of their degenerate or barbarian state. The orientals (Non- Western people) were represented as less human, less civilized, as child or savages or heedless mass. Or they were depicted as inferior only because they were different from the Whites. Thus over determined by the stereotypes, the characterization of indigenous people tended to screen out their agency, diversity and resistance. During the time of high colonialism, the writers cherished the idea of white superiority, they maintained and celebrated the dichotomy between ‘us’ and ‘them’. They represented the ‘Whites’ as the civilizers of the world and apostle of light, and the ‘Blacks’ as degenerate, barbaric, calm, stoic and in the need of European masters to civilize and to uplift them out of their filth. Boehmer reminds us this idea when she writes: “Stereotypes of the other as indolent malingerers, shirkers, good for nothing, layabouts, degenerate versions of the pastoral idler, were the stock-in-trade of colonialist writing. In contrast the white man represented himself as the archetypal worker and provident profit-maker” (38).

Colonial writers rejected to include indigenous characters with any significant role. If any role is given, that is always a negative one. ELLAKE Boehmer writes: “Where the rest, the non-west, was assumed to be marginal and secondary to the metropole” (24). So, to the readers like us, the world represented in colonialist fiction seems strangely empty of indigenous characters. The important actions and adventures are that of the colonizers, of white men. As Boehmer writes: “The drama that there is is their drama. Almost without exception there is no narrative interest without European involvement or intervention” (69). Even if the natives are represented, they are shown in hid less, mass lacking individual identity as human

beings. Especially where they were resistant to colonial drama, they were shown in need of leadership, in capable of self-governance and managing their own resources.

Language and literature are together implicated in constructing the binary of a European 'self' and a non-European 'other', which, as Edward Said's *Orientalism* suggested, is a part of the creation of colonial authority. Literary texts are crucial to the formation of colonial discourses as they work imaginatively and upon people as individuals. They are to play key role in attempting to impart western values to the natives, constructing European culture as superior and as a measure of human values, and thereby maintaining colonial rule. The Whites were always at the apex of theory, of race, of every thing, and the source of every significant activity.

The colonized subject is characterized as the 'other' through discourses such as primitive and cannibal, as a means of establishing the binary opposition of the colonizer and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and worldview. The term 'other' was coined for the process by which imperial discourse creates it. Whereas the other corresponds to the focus of desire for power (the M-other or Father-or Empire) in relation to which the subject is created by the discourse of power. The other can refer to the mother whose separation from subject locates her as the first focus of desire; it can refer to the father whose otherness locates the subject in the symbolic orders; it can refer to the unconscious itself because the unconscious is structured like a language that is separate from the language of subject.

This is the intellectual backdrop against which postcolonial theory emerged. Boehmer says: "Post Colonial theory recognizes that the colonial discourse typically rationalizes itself through rigid oppositions such as maturity/ immaturity, civilization/ barbarism, progressive/ primitive, and real/ spiritual"(25). In this context, postcolonial criticism attempts to re-examine the colonial relationship and colonial prospective

employed in the discourse of cultural representation and the text dealing with colonial relations.

There are diverse issues and opinions about what this term 'Post colonial' means, whether the simple semantic meaning, or any perspective that sees colonialism as a point of departure or the situation of the post independent nation that is still under the similar pattern of domination even after the country is officially liberated. It is so very amorphous because of its multiple connotations, and methodological and conceptual ambiguities.

Many writers and critics are troubled by the periodicity the term evokes. The temporal indication, 'Post', draws our attention away from present inequalities political, economic and discursive. In this regard the 'Post' in post colonial fallaciously suggests to the installation of regimes of power substantively different from colonial structures, implicitly one that rectifies the unequal global distribution of power. The basic assumption of this term is that former colonies share certain qualities and experiences. There is both continuity and break in the nature of government and structure of power from colonial societies. The Postcolonial governments are obviously different from the colonial regimes, but the freedom and self-rule for which the colonized fought bitterly proved to be unexpectedly illusive. New forms of domination and dependence pervaded the so-called independent nations.

Ashcroft in his book *Post-colonial Studies Reader* gives its definition as: "The word Post Colonial has come to stand both the material effects of colonization and the huge diversity of every day and sometimes hidden responses to it through out the world" (3). So, in this research Post Colonial would mean the material effect of colonization, responses to it and also the time after the official end of colonialism.

Post- Colonialism means after Colonialism. This semantic definition is too restrictive and too limiting, for it implies only political independence and suggests that colonialism is completely ended. It doesn't take into account the continuing far-reaching effects of colonialism:

All post colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem. The development of new elites with independent societies, often buttressed by neo colonial institution; the development of internal division based on racial, linguistic and religious discrimination nations; the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous people in settler/invader societies- all these testify to the fact that post – colonial is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. (Ashcroft 2)

As mentioned earlier, the uneasy incorporation of mutually antagonistic theories Marxism and post structuralism confounds any uniformity of approach. As a consequence, there is little consensus regarding the proper content, scope and relevance of postcolonial studies. Said says: “The texts are worldly, to some degree they are events and even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted” (5). Postcolonial theory facilitates us to see any cultural artifact on its politico- historical context. Said also writes in the same vein.

Postcolonial theory attempts to reexamine the colonial relationship and colonial perspective employed in discourse of cultural representation and the texts dealing with colonial relations. By subverting the colonial perspective, Postcolonial critics have forcefully deconstructed the long cherished discourses which, to support

colonization process, produced colonizing myths about calmness, laziness, deceit and irrationality of non-western people. Frantz Fanon, an Algerian anticolonial revolutionary and one of the eminent post colonial critics, seems to be more radical, as Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism* writes that Fanon “reverses the hitherto accepted paradigm by which Europe gave the colonies their modernity and argues instead that not only were the well-being and the progress Europe built up with the sweats and that dead bodies of Negroes [. . .] but Europe is literally the creation of the Third world” (197).

Postcolonial study directs its critique against the cultural hegemony of European knowledge in an attempt to reassert the epistemological value and agency of non-European world. As we know there was (and is) always an unequal distribution of power among cultures, and that ultimately affects representation of one culture by other.

Postcolonial theory incorporates the problem of representation in colonial writings under its subjects of study. Next issues that are constantly dealt in postcolonial studies are the neocolonial domination, various versions of nationalism, problem of migration, hybridism and diaspora. Regarding issues under study of postcolonial theory, the editors of *Post colonial Studies Reader* mention: “Migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourse of imperial Europe [. . .] and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these came into being” (2).

To struggle against colonial occupation, formerly mathematics colonized nations carried the slogan of nationalism and every section of the society came under this umbrella. But after the nations got independence, that unity in the name of

nationalism could not long last because of its regression into various forms, some where neocolonial formation, and in few places ethnic nationalism. So, postcolonial theory very often speaks for more liberal transnational and transcultural unity, and rejects nationalism as an end in itself. Padmini Mongia, on her introduction to Postcolonial theory writes:

Postcolonial theory, on the other hand, problematises the nation even as an ‘imagined’ community. It rejects not only ‘western imperum’ but also the nationalist project and takes as its task the understanding and critique of the line between the structure of knowledge and the form of oppression of the two hundred years. (5)

Thus, from the huge chunk of the issue in postcolonial studies, this short introduction has shed light especially on two aspects: the case of representing an alien nation, its people and culture in colonial writings, and the neocolonial rise in recently independent nation.

Postcolonial theorists and writers admit that Colonialism continues to affect the former colonies after political independence. Post colonial writers, though speak for defining and recreating national history through restoring and reinventing myths and their own cultural roots, could not help condemning this new form of imperialism.

The seminal book for post-colonial theory, Said’s *Orientalism*, is the first to explore historically unbalanced relationship between the Orient and the West. Said relentlessly unmask the ideological disguises of imperialism--reciprocal relationship between colonial power and knowledge. In this regard, discussing Said, Mongia writes: “...that cultural texts play a part in the great game of colony and empire, of race and its deployment, so that the last two hundred years of European imperialism

had to be understood vis-à-vis the cultural texts that laid the grand work for and buttressed the structure of imperialism” (4).

Orientalism is a generic term Said uses to describe the western approach to the East. It is the discipline by which the orient is approached systematically as a topic of learning, discovery and practice. In one of his definitions, Said defines Orientalism as “[. . .] the corporate institution for dealing with the orient by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over orient” (3).

Commonly regarded as the catalyst and reference point for post colonialism, *Orientalism* represents the first phase of Postcolonial theory. Rather than engaging with ambivalent condition of the colonial aftermath- or indeed, with its history and motivations of anticolonial resistance- it directs attention to the discursive and textual production of colonial meanings and, concomitantly, to the consolidation of colonial hegemony. Said points out how the extension of empire went simultaneously with the textual production: “Imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible to read one without in some way dealing with the other” (culture 84). Said defined Orientalism, the writing from the west about the east, as a ‘discourse’, that is the project of representing, imagining, translating, containing and managing the intransigent and incomprehensible ‘Orient’ through textual codes and conventions. In writing the ‘Orient’ through governing metaphors and tropes, Orientalists simultaneously underwrote the positional superiority of western consciousness and in so doing rendered the ‘Orient’ a playground for western “desires, repressions, investments, projections” (Said, *Orientalism* 8). Thus the text provided an ideological ground for the empire to thrive. A huge body of writings

formed a coherent system of western knowledge about the orient and it served as a lens for the writers to see the real orient. No writer or the scholar can detach himself from the circumstances of life, set of beliefs and his position in the society. Said alerts us in the very beginning of the *Orientalism*: “The orient was almost European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (1). Orientalism imposed limit upon thought about the orient. Even the most imaginative writers of the high imperial era were constraint in what they would either experience of or say about the orient.

Said relentlessly unmasks the ideological disguises of imperialism. In this regard, its particular contribution to the field of anticolonial scholarship inheres in its painstaking & overstated exposition of the reciprocal relationship between colonial knowledge and colonial powers. It proposes that ‘Orientalism’-or the corporate institution for dealing with the orient, teaching it, writing about it and researching it- has always been an essential cognitive accompaniment & inducement to Europe’s imperial adventures in the hypothetical ‘east’. It claims that the peculiarly ‘western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient’ (Said, *Orientalism* 3) is inextricable from the peculiarly western style of studying and thinking, about the Orient. In other words, its answer to the way the east was won suggests that we reconsider some of the ways in which the east was known.

Said takes Orientalism as a paradigmatic instance of institutionalized and degraded knowledge, the oppose through and adversarial or oppositional counter – knowledge. His analysis of this field is built upon three important meanings of ‘Orientalism’, which he supplies at the beginning of his book. First, Said invokes the conventional understanding as a field of specialization or academic pursuit of the orient from eighteenth century scholars and enthusiasts of oriental cultures undertook

the first translation of the texts like the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Shakuntala* and portions of the *Upanishads*. Said is somewhat liberal in his view that Orientalism includes the activity of any professional western academic –historical, sociologists, anthropologists, area studies experts or philologist-currently or previously engaged in studying, researching or teaching the orient. Secondly he says that Orientalism also refers to any occasion when a western has either imagined or written about the nonwestern world. So Orientalism becomes an imaginative cast of mind or style of thought which covers roughly two million of western consciousness about the east. According to this meaning Homer, Aeschylus, Dante are all rebaptised as Orientalist. Thirdly, said delivers his principle understanding of Orientalism as an enormous system or intertextual network of rules and procedures, which regulate any thing that may be thought writer or imagined about the orient. This third meaning defines Orientalism as a western attempt to ‘know’ or directly engaged with the non-western world by an intention to dichotomize the relationship between the ‘occident’ and the ‘orient’ into an us-them contrast, and also to essentialize the resultant ‘other’; To speak about the oriental ‘character’, ‘mind’ in a generalizing way.

The significance of Orientalism is that as a mode of knowing the other it was a supreme example of the construction of the other, a form of authority. The orient is not an inert fact of nature, but a phenomenon constructed by the generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians, and more importantly, by the naturalizing of a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes. The relationship between the occident and the orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony. So, Orientalist discourse for Said is more valuable as a sign of the power exerted by the west over the orient than a ‘true’ discourse about the orient. Under the general heading of knowledge of the

orient, and within the umbrella of western hegemony over the orient from the eighteenth century onwards, there emerged a complex orient suitable for study in academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for the theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe. Orientalism is not, however, a western plot to hold-down the 'oriental' world. It is:

A distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction... but also of a whole series of 'interests' which ...it not only creates but maintains. It is rather than expresses a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is a manifestly different world. (47)

The discourse of Orientalism persists into the present, particularly in the west's relationship with east as is evidenced in its study, its responding in media, its representation in general. But as a discursive mode, Orientalism models a wide range of institutional constructions of the colonial other, one example being the study, discussion and the general representation of Africa on the west since the nineteenth century. In this sense its practice remains persistent to the operation of imperial power on whatever form it adopts; to know, to move, to fix the other in discourse to maintain a far-reaching political control.

In a chapter in *Orientalism*, entitled 'Latent and Manifest Orientalism', Orientalist notions of the orient, Said concludes, whether latent or manifest, depend on what he sees as total absence, in Western culture, of the orient as a 'genuinely felt and experienced force'. Here he talks about one of the important developments in

nineteenth century that is the distillation of the essential ideas about the Orient- its mentality, its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its backwardness- into a separate and unchallenged coherence. Thus when any writer used the word 'Oriental', it was a specific body of information about the orient for a reader that seemed to be morally neutral and objectively valid having epistemological status equal to that of historical chronology or geographical location. The work of various nineteenth century scholars and of 'imaginative writers' made this essential body of knowledge more clear, more detailed, more substantial- and distinct from 'Occidentalism'. According to Said:

Orientalist ideas could enter into alliance with general philosophical theories (such as those about the history of mankind and civilization) and diffuse world –hypothesis, as philosophers sometimes call them; and in many ways the professional contributors to Oriental knowledge were anxious to couch their formulations and ideas, their scholarly work, their considered contemporary observations, in language and terminology whose cultural validity derived from other sciences and systems of thought. (205)

The distinction Said makes is really between an almost unconscious (and certainly and untouchable) positivity, which he calls latent Orientalism, and the various stated views about oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology and so forth, which he calls Manifest Orientalism. Whatever change occurs in knowledge of the orient is found almost exclusively in Manifest Orientalism; the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant. The scholars kept intact the separateness of the orient, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability; this is why almost every writer on the Orientalism saw the orient as a locale requiring western attention and reconstruction. It existed as a place isolated

from the mainstream of European progress in even science, arts, and commerce. So, whatever good or bad values were imputed to the orient, for Said, were functions of some 'highly specialized western interest in the orient (206).

Knowledge is not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power. This Foucauldian concept insights Said's foundational work *Orientalism*, which points out the extent to which 'Knowledge' about 'the Orient' as it was produced and circulated in Europe was an ideological accompaniment of colonial power. This is the Western representation of non-western culture in the scholarly discipline called *Orientalism*. Said's use of culture and knowledge to interrogate colonial power somehow inaugurated colonial discourse studies where it meets Foucault's use of knowledge as 'power' Said's description delivers an understanding of *Orientalism* as a discourse- in Foucault's sense of term. Sociolinguist theory tells us that discourses, or discursive formations are always linked with the exercise of power. They are modes of utterance or systems of meanings, which are both constituted by, and committed to, the perpetuation of dominant social systems. Discourses are heavily polished cognitive systems, which control and delimit both the mode and the means of representation in any society. Accordingly, colonial or *Orientalist* discourses are typical of discursive activity whenever they claim the right to speak for the mute and uncomprehending orient and, in so doing, represent it as the negative, underground image or impoverished 'other' of western rationality. So *Orientalism* becomes a discourse at the point at which it starts systematically to produce stereotypes about Orientals and the orient, such as the heat and dust, the teeming market place, the terrorist, the courtesans, the Asian despot, the child like native, the mystical east. These stereotypes, said tells us, conform the necessity and desirability of colonial government by endlessly confirming the positional superiority

of the West over the positional inferiority of the East. .

Discourse analysis makes it possible to make a connection between the visible and the hidden, the dominant and the marginalized, ideas and institutions. It shows how power works through language, literature, culture and the institution that regulates the daily lives and how it functions by producing a 'discourse' about the Orient- that is, by generating structures of thinking which were manifest in literary and artistic production, in political and scientific writings and in the creation of Oriental studies. According to Foucault until the period of renaissance people had assumed that language reflected reality (objects, things). But later on language came to be seen, not as a reflection of reality, but as a transparent 'film', dissociated from it. It became possible to identify words and statement not as signs, representing objects and things, but as events, floating in space, field or episteme. Knowledge became not so much a matter of fact as the outcome of a struggle for power, in which events and discourses created new regimes of knowledge, which would survive until the time as new ones arose, capable of taking their place. For Foucault truth is not outside the power. Said shows how this discipline was created and followed by other disciplines like philology, history, anthropology, philosophy, archeology and literature.

Orientalism examines how the formal study of the 'Orient', along with key literary and cultural texts, consolidated certain ways of seeing and thinking which in turn contributed to the functioning of colonial power. Said explains that certain texts are accorded:

The authorities of academics, institutions and governments [. . .] Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose

material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. (94)

Said accords a greater importance to individual others than does Foucault but he also wishes to connect them to structures of thought and to the workings of power, as Foucault does. He brings together a range of creative writers, statesmen, political thinkers, philologists and philosophers who contributed to Orientalism as an institution which, at that time, provided the lens through which the Orient would be viewed, and controlled; but equally this control itself spawned these days of knowing, studying, believing and writing.

Said argues that representation of the 'Orient' in European literary texts, travelogues and other writings contributed to the creation of a dichotomy between Europe and its 'others' and this dichotomy was central to the creation of European culture, to the maintenance and extension of European hegemony over other lands. Said's project is to show how 'knowledge' about Orient was part of the process of maintaining power over them. Thus the status of 'knowledge' is demystified and the lines between the ideological and the objective blurred. For Said the impressive knowledge of Orientalists was filtered through their cultural bias, for the study of Orient was not objective but

A political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them') [. . .] When one uses categories like Oriental and Western as both the starting and the end points of analysis, research, public policy [. . .] the result is usually to polarize the distinction- the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western- and limit the human encounter between different cultures,

traditions, and societies. (45-46)

Said believes that knowledge of the East could never be innocent or 'objective' because it was produced by human beings who were necessarily embedded in colonial history and relationships. For Said, Orientalism, or the study of the orient, was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar Europe, the west and the East. The concept of Binarism established by Saussure some how plays role here. The binary logic of imperialism is a development of the tendency of western thought in general to see the world in terms of binary oppositions that established a relation of dominance. Said's *Orientalism* recognizes that the colonial discourse typically rationalizes itself through rigid oppositions such as a difference between center/margin; colonizer/colonized; metropolis/empire; civilized/primitive; progressive/stoic and these represent very efficiently the violent hierarchy. The binary constructs a scandalous category between the two terms where colonizer, white, west, human and beautiful are collectively opposed to colonized, black, east, inhuman and ugly.

Said shows that this opposition is crucial to European self conception: if Eastern people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if Eastern people are barbaric, sensual, lazy and stoic Europe is civilization itself, with controlling power and hard working who can be seen developing and marching ahead; the orient has to be feminine so that Europe can be masculine.

Now the question here is about non- western writers. These too did not develop in isolation but were shaped by foreign concept. So Rohinton Mistry, though he denies, writes as a man whose Western view of the Non- Western world is so ingrained in him to blind him to other histories, other cultures and other aspiration.

III. Mistry's Orientalist Attitude in *A Fine Balance*

In accordance with the observation made in the preceding chapters, this chapter makes an analysis of Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. It places the writer on the threshold of Orientalism and conformations and continuation of the hierarchical ethos. Though Mistry is oriental born writer, he orientalizes the Orient by presenting India as an antithesis of tragedy reinforcing the very Yeatsian notion of calm and stoic east. He follows an Irish poet's conception about orient that imbues the novel with stoicism that doesnot always find itself in the harmony with novel's uncompromising depiction of injustice.

Though Mistry refuses to be called an Orientalist in his intent and purpose, close reading of this novel reveals that he had hardly been able to come out of the tradition of Western superiority complex. Rhetorical instances in the novel show that he is restrained by the idea of hierarchy. He could not detach him from the western attitude and ideology. His continuation of Orientalist ethos can be discerned in his representation of Indian people, its landscape and politics.

What makes Mistry an Orientalist is his stereotypical representation of India as stoic and calm. Here, representation does not only mean the photographic representation of India. But the act of representing the orient is saturated by ideological beliefs. Representation with its close association with superiority complex serves as a legitimating source which functions as a standard to evaluate the objects of representation, namely the society and its values. The whole process of Orientalism and Mistry's attitude towards it is so richly and concretely illuminated and reflected in the characterization of the doomed characters that suffer in the tempestuous social and political condition of the country.

Adaptation and accommodation, rather than any social change is their idea of maintaining balance in one's life. The first of the four doomed characters to appear is Dina, a Parsi woman who had been brought up by a domineering older brother after her father's death and her mother's nervous collapse. She marries against his will, but after three years of marital happiness her husband is killed in a traffic accident. She is a Parsi widow who believes in independence but later realizes that she needs 'other' to survive as she is sentenced to her brother's home as a domestic drudge.

Although Manek's problem seems self-imposed or the result of his over-drawn sensibility, he finally succumbs to what he calls the hypocrisy of his country's government. The account of great misfortunes comes to a close and that the one member of the foursome best equipped to succeed economically should kill himself is heavy with irony. In the contrast, the less fortunate survive by achieving what the lawyer calls "a fine balance between hope and despair" (231).

There is a glimpse of hope in the characters after their encounter with great misfortunes and destruction throughout the novel. The two tailors just when their lives have taken some order return to their village with a hope to find a wife for Om. But their dream is shattered when the so-called family planning programme of the government unwillingly sterilizes them. When Ishvar comes to know that the operation is reversible, he becomes relaxed with a hope:

[Ishvar] reached over to the next mattress and stroked his nephew's arm. 'Bas my child, we have found our solution, no need to worry now. We will go back, reverse the nussbandi, and come next year for wedding. There will be other families interested by then. And may be by then, this accused Emergency will also be over, and sanity will return to government'. (535- 536).

This hope allows them to adjust in the tempestuous situation and the same hope stands as a warning against tragedy.

Three different speakers, with three different meanings, present the word 'balance' to us three times. The first time we encounter it, the context is perfectly Vedic. After Narayan and the other cobblers are tortured and killed for entertaining ideas above their station as "chamaar"(145), the Thakur or village Brahmin explains why he is reluctant to give the dead back to the family:

"He does not deserve a proper cremation," said Thakur Dharmasi. "And the father is more to blame than the son. His arrogance went against everything we hold sacred. What the ages had put together. Dukhi had dared to break asunder; he had turned cobblers into tailors, distorting society's timeless balance. Crossing the line of caste had to be punished with the utmost severity," said the Thakur. (147)

There is nothing delicate or sensitive about the Thakur's idea of balance, which is closer to the rigidly enforced set of social strata than to any harmonious equilibrium of opposing forces. And yet the Thakur draws on the idea of latter to justify the former; the violent inflicted upon the cobblers, he seems to be saying is a kind of recompense for the subversive violence they had tried to inflict upon society by "daring to break asunder" (147) its precious tradition. Thus Thakur's "timeless balance" is one that may not be disturbed, existing for the benefit of the community, not necessarily of the individual. It embodies the holy, is embedded in eternity and re-describes any attempt to upset it as profane.

The second time we encounter the idea of balance, however, a much more personal definition of the word is expressed- not so much as cosmic harmony of the things, but as a means of survival in difficult times:

The proof reader nodded, “ you see, you cannot draw lines and compartments and refuse to budge beyond them. Sometimes you have to use your failures as stepping-stones to success. You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair”. He paused, considering what he had just said, “Yes”, he repeated, “In the end, it’s all a question of balance”. (231)

This time the definition comes from a part-time lawyer whom young Manek meets on a train, rather than from any upper cast Hindu. The lawyer’s words here offer an almost opposite world-view to that of the Thakur. The uncrossable “lines of caste”(231) that the Thakur takes as essential and all-important for balance are, for the lawyer, senseless and illusory. According to the lawyer, one can only keep one’s balance if s/he ignores such lines rather than being devotee to them. The lawyer’s secularism can be seen when he prefers self-preservation rather than social stability, as the key purpose of keeping one’s balance. Thakur’s fear of communal anarchy and chaos shows his willingness to take advantage by not bringing change in the ancient realms of society and tradition.

Mistry presents the lawyer as a secular guru: being only intellectual in the novel- certainly the one who can quote Yeats- the lawyer’s speech represents the longest stretch of abstract reflection in the entire novel. His speech has the captivating effect on Manek, the inclusion of novel’s title in his monologue, and the positive contrast with the uppity, ignorant father and daughter in the same carriage, all enhance the reader-appeal of the lawyer and imbibe his words with an unquestionable significance. They are words, however, which possess no real objection to the social injustice. Lawyer’s idea of adaptation and accommodation, rather than any social correction makes him polar opposite to Avinash, the school activist who struggles

against the Emergency Rule's tyranny and pays for his inability to accommodate with a painful death.

The third mention of balance occurs towards the end of the novel, after the legless beggar Shankar is run over by a bus. Beggarmaster, the curious 'manager' of the quarter's beggars, and also Shankar's stepbrother explains Dina the satisfaction he deserves from cremation ceremonies:

[. . .] don't worry, it's a beautiful sight. You will come away feeling good. [. . .] That's the way I always feel after watching a burning pyre-completeness, a calmness, a perfect balance between life and death. In fact, for that reason I even go to strangers' cremations. Whenever I have some free times, if I see a funeral procession, I join it. (505)

This time the balance is neither social (like the Thakur's) nor individual (like the lawyer's), but rather a mystical equilibrium, a setting of accounts with the universe in which the tragic death of the unfortunate Shankar is somehow 'recovered'. Suddenly, the horrifying road-accident, which robs Shankar of his life, is taken in different way. It takes a more universal scheme, whose essence is "perfect balance". Beggarmaster's universe is fundamentally just; its apparent aberrations of injustice, cruelty and social inequality, one cannot help feeling, are rather a consequence of our inability to understand this profound inscrutable balance. In this narrow sense, Beggarmaster's need for a balanced society is the lawyer's need for balanced life. The completeness and calmness, Beggarmaster experiences stem from an understanding of the necessity of this balance. With in such a worldview, it has been said often enough there is no place for the tragic.

The most captivating difficulty of *A Fine Balance* in above passage lies between transcendental movements of stoical serenity and brutality. This difficulty,

by no means detracts from the novel or flows a superficial wholeness, but it does not introduce a complexity that does threaten at times to pull the text in completely opposite direction. The result is the novel of social protest- but one in which all the happy, surviving characters are those who have decided to work with the system, whether good or corrupted, not against it. The narrator says: “Once [the compounder] put wrong thing in the medicine mixture. Customer died, and police came to investigate. Manager and police talked. Manager offered money, police took money, and every body was happy” (397).

Beggarmaster’s calmness can be seen in a sense of peace as in Sanskrit ‘*Shantih*’ which is way to the restoration of certain balance, the completion of a certain circle. Shankar’s horrible death and grief is recovered in a single paragraph, redeemed with a circular gesture, described as the stage towards a more distant destination, indeed the final chapter of the novel titled as “The circle is completed” (545).

The biggest source of unease in the novel is the fate of those characters who refuse to accept both Beggarmaster’s and lawyer’s subtly stoical understanding of balance. Narayan, as he becomes conscious about the politics and voting system, insists on casting his own vote in the village elections. The result is, he is mutilated and hung from a tree. Avinash, the student activist who hopes to “weed out the evils of the campus” (243) is turned very much and finally killed by government ‘goondas’. There are also cases of ‘conversion’: Om and Dina, initially determined to fight their respective oppressors, upper-caste tyranny and a patronizing older brother respectively, ultimately learn the wisdom of compromising and accepting the benefits of complicity. Om’s paan-spit at the Thakur who murdered his parents costs him his manhood and ultimately forces him into beggary; Dina’s refusal to live the life of a

typical Parsi housewife under the control of her brother not only inflicts upon her the strange days and hardships that she finally fails to continue her work for Au-Revour company. Cobbler children's interest to read and write is taken as "a terrible offense"(113) and the teacher must punish them for their "misdeeds"(113). For such characters, the possibility of relative happiness is only when they learn to accept the limitations of their predicament and make the most of finite freedoms they have managed to escape with: Om and the crippled Ishvar, whom he pulls around on a set of castors, making money as beggars out of the result of their forceful serialization; Dina, living in her brother's house secretly feeds the two misfortunes.

Set nine years later at the time of Indira Gandhi's assassination, we are offered two perspective on the fates of Dina, Ishvar and Om, first through the tragic eyes of Manek, who can only see how the lives of all three protagonists have been ruined, and then from the protagonist's own perspective, who appear to have come to terms with their own misfortunes in a more flexible way than Manek can allow. The closing paragraph of the novel ends on a scene of buffoonery, as Om and the legless Ishvar perform a mini-vaudeville scene before being housed out of the house by Dina:

Om raised the rope and halted. Ishvar made a clacking-chuckling sound with his tongue against his teeth, imitating a bullock-cart driver.

His nephew pawed the ground and tossed his head.

"Stop it", she scolded. "If you behave that way on the pavement, no one will give you a single paisa".

"Come on my faithful" said Ishvar. "Lift your hoofs or I'll feed you a dose of opium". Chuckling, Om trotted away plumbly. They quit clowning when they emerged into the street.

Dina shut the door, shaking her head. Those who made her laugh every day. (614)

The comic scene offers a stark contrast to the shocked Manek, who is appalled both by the disabilities Om and Ishvar have received as well as by the image of myopic, ageing spinsterhood which Dina seems to present to him. In a way, Manek becomes the only character in the entire book to acquire a scene of the tragic, that is, a notion of loss, which is unspeakable, irrecoverable, and resistant to irony. Overwhelmed by the loss of his old friends- and by the suicides of Avinash's sisters- Manek is unable to replicate their stoical re-description of the tragedy that has befallen them.

The co-existence of such two contrastive endings begs the question: with what kind of knot has Mistry finally tied up his text? The affectionate buffoonery of Ishvar and Om, the generously maternal figure of Dina, and the closing image of despairing Manek, leaping into the path of the train: is this a warning against the tragic, and those who could cultivate it? In the struggle into the two sub-texts- an ethos of social acceptance one could almost term urban fatalism, and an indignant tone of social and political emancipation-Does Manek's death signify the failure of an ultimately Western vocabulary? The duel ending signifies two extremes whose avoidance gives meaning to the title. The "fine balance" between allowing oneself enough hope to remain politically awake and keeping an emergency supply of stoicism for when things go radically wrong.

Unlike other novels that have got sophisticated authorial comments on the characters, Misery's novel rarely offers abstract interpretations of its struggling figures. Kitchen conversations are faithfully reported with little commentary, rants and diatribes dutifully recorded alongside the barest of facial expressions: raised eyebrows, snorts, the moistening of eyes. Moments in which the protagonists reflect

upon their states and try to analyze it are few and far between. The book's only two operating metaphors- that of the quilt and balancing act offer an indication of how skillfully Mistry has been; intellectual monologues appear (when they do) as asides of language and ideas in carefully painted deserts of difficulty and struggle. In this depiction of the traumas of the four individuals, trying to survive the nightmarish malevolence of Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule, there is the social realist's familiar fear of embellishment as dilution, not to mention a mistrust of abstraction as distraction. This reticence on Mistry's part produces many moments in the book, which are somehow out of place, and yet which paradoxically complete *A Fine Balance's* gallery of injustices and hardship by their very incompleteness. After the 'goondas' have trashed Dina's flat and gone, the occupants return to find it filled with a stench whose source is unclear. Several minutes of looking around the rooms fails to locate the source of the smell:

“Those stinking goondas must have left it behind”, she said, and Ishvar agreed. Then Om, who was kneeling on the floor, picking up the last bits of the broken glass, discovered the smell was coming from her shoe. She had stepped in something on the pavement. She went outside, scrapped off the brown mess from the sole, and washed it.
(439)

The episode is brief – its description takes up barely a page- and yet we are thrown momentarily by the superfluity of the incident. In the middle of the drama, one of the protagonists steps in dog- faeces and brings it into the house. She cleans it off, the story moves on. The vignette seems somehow unconnected with the surrounding developments, unstitched to the complex fabric of the novel, until we realize that the unrelatedness of the incident is precisely the author's point. Unlike other novels,

where British and the caste system can be seen as the key perpetrators of the protagonist's sufferings, there is no single source of evil responsible for the myriad difficulties Mistry's characters suffer. Whether it is dog-dirt on the streets or goondas, difficulties rain down upon the characters from all sides: bullying brothers, the Shiv Sena, the local village brahmin, Congress party wahllas, private enterprise, sometimes even simple bad luck. In this sense, the reticence and sparseness on Mistry's prose signifies a reluctance to stitch and blend the novel's vicissitudes into a single diatriave, a single cry against a single foe.

The two poems Mistry's lawyer quotes directly from- "Easter 1916" and "Lapis Lazuli"- both touch on the central themes not just of *A Fine Balance*, but of all of Mistry's fictions: resignation and resistance. Readers, familiar with Mistry's other novels like *Such a Long Journey* will not be surprised at the influence of a modern poet upon the fabric of the novel. The two Yeatsian lines quoted by the lawyer in *A Fine Balance* - "Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of heart" (229) from *Easter 1916* and "All things fall and are built again, and those that build them again are gay" (230) from *Lapis Lazuli*- provide the intriguing paradox of an 'Oriental' quoting the words of an Irish poet on how an 'Oriental' should think. Dina's heart has been turned into stone by the sacrifices she willingly undergoes to preserve her independence. Manek's inability to understand how are all things fall and are built again is responsible for his suicide. Ishvar nodded: "And are the two children happy without monkey man?" Beggar master flipped his unchanged hand in a who-knows gesture and said: "They will have to get used to it. Life doesnot guarantee happiness" (505).

The representation of the protagonists' environment also reveals the need for a certain "accommodation". The city (Bombay) displayed to us in *A Fine Balance* is an unpredictable, dazzlingly precarious place that is a grim succession of shops, street

corners and cramped rooms where anything can happen to anyone. Goondas can appear at a moment's notice to smash up an apartment, bulldozers can materialize from nowhere to level a suburb, busses can run out the more careless existences, trains can come hurtling into the protagonists in the middle of their toilets, policeman can arrive without warning to arrest and deport truck loads of unfortunates to a work camp fifty miles north of the city. However the city repeatedly bursts in on the protagonists' comfort and stability throughout the book, thwarting and complicating, paralyzing and dismaying, the characters are very much optimistic and tolerant in the name of simple good luck. Gazing upon the damaged bodies accumulating in the truck. Ishvar said: "See how lucky we are Om. We could be lying here with broken bones if our stars were not in the proper position" (367).

An image of eternal India already familiar to Westerners through other previous writers is re-evoked but this time through Yeatsian eyes where Mistry details his Bombay only serving to emphasize a loss of agency, rather than any kind of restoration. The neutral, limited viewpoint of the narrator suggests that unlike Narayan and his southern Indian community, nobody is in control of the city. The possibility of survival is only when they accept the limitations of the society. Any simple concept of change and progress can ruin their lives. Though Dukhi Mochi's decision to turn his sons into tailors was indeed courageous, his friends feared for his family for they said: "Dukhi Mochi Has gone mad as he is bringing destruction upon his household" (95).

The sweet association among the characters is broken through unexpected events: horrific would be a mild word to describe them though many circumstances and necessity intertwine the lives of the characters, they have their solutions always. This capacity of finding a new way of living keeps them away from tragedy. Monkeyman,

a most struggling character throughout the novel loses his both monkeys and becomes upset for a while. But finally the sense of 'balance' allows him to withstand the outer world, a world awash with dangers to personal identity: " He was silent for a while, then, oddly enough, broached the subject himself: 'I have other talents, you know Gymnastics, Tightrope working, juggling, balancing. A new act without monkey is possible. I will think later about what to do. First, I must finish mourning'" (269).

The Hair Collector, killer of the two innocent longhaired beggars is the representative of the 'barbaric' and 'monstrous' natives. His barbaric nature is seen in his brutal killing, in the whim of making money, of the poor beggar. He is the one character strengthening the stereotypic image of the locals as barbaric, greedy and cruel.

In the dearth of intellectual exchange, which in many ways is the most striking feature of *A Fine Balance*, something uncompromisingly skeletal, if not deliberately reticent about the book's structure emerges. The purity in a certain representation of cruelty- a style bereft of any western intellectualization, modern, post modern or otherwise- is expressed in a sparseness and absence of commentary that is not without its own ambiguities. The most horrifying passages in the entire book are the narrator's description of the punishment meted out to Narayan and his two friends after they have insisted on filling in and consigning their own voting slips in the local election:

In the evening, after the ballot boxes were taken away, burning coals were held to the three men's genitals, and then stuffed into their mouths. Their screams were heard through the village until their lips and tongues melted away. The still silent bodies were taken down from the tree. When they began to stir, the ropes were transferred from their ankles to their necks, and the three were hanged. The bodies were

displayed in the village square. (146)

Simply the plain and unadorned prose magnifies the atrocities tenfold; employing the most empirical of descriptions, Mistry does not waste even a single adjective pleading for empathy. No appeals for pity, pleas for understanding, outraged condemnations are allowed to interfere in this singular, lucid description of cruelty.

Mistry uses inhuman language to show man's inhumanity to man. The language of *A Fine Balance* makes it a silent film bereft of dialogue and music, a straightforward succession of painful images. Casting our minds back to the inversion of the Mahatma's theory concerning the relationship between men and women, sex crimes also become one feature of the novel. Nusswan punishes Dina because she is rapidly becoming sexually attractive and he does this by violently "pinching her nipples" (20). What is interesting is how Nusswan treats Dina like one would a 'rakshasi' (Demoness). He threatens to cut off her tongue when Dina teases him. She has noticed that Nusswan desires her when he begins to observe her strangely. Here inversion of Gandhian vision shows Nusswan's ambiguous sexual relationship regarding Dina. When he tries to arrange her marriage, Nusswan chooses men, his friends in fact, who resemble him. This again reinforces our Gandhian inversion where we clearly see that only clones of Nusswan appear 'suitable' for marriage with Dina: "[Nusswan] started inviting eligible bachelors to their home ... and they reminded her of Nusswan in all they said and did (29).

Unlike the tailors, for whom nothing is as fine as one's native place, the situation of slight 'alienation' can be seen in unsatisfied Manek when looking for more opportunities, goes beyond his village and found high paying job in Arab:

'Are you happy in Dubai? Is your job interesting?'

'It's okay'.

‘Tell me more about it. You wrote that you are a manager now?’

‘Supervisor, looking after a maintenance team- central air-conditioning’.

She nodded. ‘And what is Dubai like?’

‘It’s okay’. (585)

Here he realized that he did not know the place, did not want to. The people, their customs, the language- it was all ‘alien’ to him now as it had been when he had landed there eight years ago. He found there, “Lots of big hotels and hundreds of shops selling gold jewelry and stereos and TVs” (678-679). He returned to India prosperous but isolated.

In Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*, the landscape, people and politics are very offensive. We are introduced to India, the time of Indira Gandhi’s assassination, through the narrator’s description. The representation of the landscape as vast, inconceivable or incomprehensible and mysterious was one of the central rhetorical strategies of the colonial writers that Mistry seems to adopt to show their backwardness and their affinity to the barbaric, calm, stoic nature. The readers can only identify a very few positive figures among locals, and the others are the representatives of the barbaric and monstrous natives. The barbaric nature of Thakur is illustrated in his brutal killing and torturing the villagers in the name of “precious tradition” (147).

The politics and also all the systems are shown quite improper and corrupted, nothing except looting, intriguing and stabbing, Noise and crowds, no place to live, water scarce, garbage every where. “ Terrible” (8). No one of the local politicians does have any serious intentions: “For politicians, passing laws is like passing water, [that] all ends down the drain” (143).

IV. Conclusion

Orientalism is the basic issue under scrutiny in *A Fine Balance*. Careful study of the novel places Mistry in the position of Orientalist. On the basis of this study, it can be deduced that Rohinton Mistry is an Orientalist in his deep seated Orientalist attitude following the very western concept. Though he is an Oriental born writer, he re-orientalises the Orient by presenting India as an antithesis of tragedy reinforcing the Yeatsian notion of calm and stoic east. Mistry refuses to be called an Orientalist in his intent and purpose, but he couldn't not detach him from the Western ideology.

What makes Mistry an Orientalist is his representation of India as stoic and calm. Mistry's Orientalist attitude is reflected more specifically in his characters whose lives are brought together in that ecstasy. Adaptation and accommodation, rather than any change or protest is their idea of maintaining balance in one's life. In the text, three different speakers, with three different meanings, present the word 'balance' three times. Firstly, the word comes when Thakur gives the cobblers fearful death in the blame of breaking the "timeless balance" of the society. Secondly the word comes from the lawyer where his secularism can be seen when he prefers self-preservation rather than social stability, as the key purpose of keeping one's balance. Thirdly, the balance is neither social nor individual; it takes a more universal skill and within such worldview, it has been said enough there is no place for the tragedy. All the happy, surviving characters are those who have decided to work with the system, whether good or corrupted, not against it. So, the characters are hopeful for better life until the end of the story. After they are forcefully castrated, Ishvar and Om decide to reverse the nussbandi and go to village for wedding. In the same way the monkey man after his monkey is killed gets a new idea of using his other talents like gymnastics, juggling for his earning and stops mourning. Hair collector, the killer of two

longhaired beggars is the representative of the barbaric and monstrous natives. In the novel, the landscape, people and politics are very offensive. All the system are shown quite improper and corrupt, nothing except looting, intriguing and stabbing. In such situation a simple act of protest brings no any glimpse of progress rather they are tortured physically as well as mentally. Thakur punishes Narayan, when he becomes conscious about the voting system and raises his voice. Avani, a school activist who speaks for some change in the government, is killed by government goondas. Om's paan spit on Thakur finally makes him eunuch. Any sense of progress becomes the main cause of their suffering. Dina starts an independent life working for a sewing company but at last she is compelled to remain in her brother's house as a domestic drudge. Manek, quite opposite to the other characters gets tragic end. The sense of alienation can be seen in him when looking for more opportunities, he goes beyond his village and returns to India prosperous but isolated.

The unbalanced condition of the characters in the unbalanced country is displayed in fragmented and episodic way in *A Fine Balance*. The story shows the sufferings of Mistry's characters and their reaction to it. Mistry's characters are suffered very much in the name of politics, society and its rules. They accept all the misfortunes hoping for a simple good luck as they think "life doesnot guarantee happiness"(505) rather than any protest. Their silent acceptance proofs the Western ideology of calm and stoic East. Mistry's representation of India and Indian people some how categorizes him as a Non-Western writer following the Western concept of East as an anti thesis of tragedy. Thus, *A Fine Balance* has sought to build the same stereotypical image of India and Mistry as an Orientalist.

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