Orientalism and India

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Introduction

A single shelf of a good European Library was worth the whole literature of India and Arbia[1].
(Lord Macaulay)

Ask the average man for what India is most celebrated, and chances are ten to one that he will ignore the glories of the Taj Mahal, the beneficence of British rule, even Mr. Kipling, and will unhesitatingly reply in one word, Jugglers. (Strand Magazine, cited in Lamont and Bates 2007).

Above statements represents an Orientalist construction of India by their British masters, as a land of eternal essences, presenting Hindu philosophy and rituals as evidence of a land where imagination was privileged over reality. India imagined as essentially irrational, others have described how darker aspects of Indian religious practice…reported cases of human sacrifices changed over time and came to be represented as primitive and barbaric, and their prevalence exaggerated for a variety of reasons (Inden, cited in Lamont and Bates, 2007:308).

Against this background, this article critically analyzes the Saidian concept of Orientalism- with particular emphasis on India. Article has argued that, India during the British raj, to some extent was indeed victim of Orientalism biases, which has profoundly influenced later generation (Neo-Oriantalist) of Indian intellectuals and political discourse of India.

For the purpose of this article, I would like to define the term, 'Orientalism'. In contemporary times, the term 'Orientalism' has become highly problematic and contested due to its broad connotation and applicability. Orientalism used to be the preferred term for the academic discipline studying the "Orient", but after Said's and others' grave critique such as Bernard Lewis now considers this word "polluted beyond salvation " and has lost its value and been abandoned by those who previously bore it[2]. Thus, it will be interesting to begin with the two earliest meanings of the term as a foundation for analyzing the nature of Orientalism with the particular attention on India. First, it was a scholarly study of the languages, literatures and cultures of the Orient (initially conceptualized as the Middle East but later encompassing all of Asia). Secondly, the term also refers to the 18th century administrative policy of the East India Company favoring the preservation of Indian languages, laws and customs with different

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[1]Lord Macaulay, governor general of British India, cited in L. Zastopuli and M. Moir, eds., The Great Indian Education Indian Debate: Documents Relating to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy(London, 1999), 165
[2]Lewis is the Cleveland E. Dodge Professor Emeritus at Princeton University. A harsh critique of Said style Orientalism, Lewis believes the West has given up the use of term Orientalism, as it used to be, this abandonment was given formal expression at the International Congress of Orientalist (Paris, 1973).

ulterior motives to achieve.

Said main argument is that Western study of Islamic civilization was political discourse meant for European self-affirmation, rather than for objective intellectual enquiry and academic study of Eastern cultures. Hence, Orientalism functioned as a method of practical, cultural discrimination applied as a means of imperialist domination, producing the claim that the Western Orientalist knows more about the Orient than do the Orientals (Keith, 1999:22).

Said, has considered, Orientalism, a discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice- where the certain collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies used by anyone who tried to talk about the East (Orientalism, 1977:187). One the one hand, Said's Orientalism, covers everything from the editing and translating of text, to numismatic, anthropological, historical, sociological, economical, literary and cultural studies, on the other hand, in every known Asiatic and North African civilization, ancient and modern Orientalist focused on the classical periods of whatever language or society it was that they studied.

Said's work, *Orientalism,* marked a radical shift in the understanding of this term. Said has employed Michel Foucault's concept of power-knowledge and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to develop a new framework to study Orientalism. Foucault's argument that power and knowledge implicate each other was particularized by Said to 'colonial power' and 'colonial knowledge'. Thus, according to him, Orientalism was not knowledge of the Orient produced by Englishmen sympathetic to the cultures of the East but it was knowledge meant to serve the power structures of colonialism (Foucault 1975:22). As Said pointed out, most Orientalist had a kind of dual purpose of improving the lives of Indian people and advancing arts and knowledge back in the heart of the Empire-as case of Indian Orientalism shows (Said, 1977:75).

Although Edward Said concentrated mainly on European Orientalism focusing on Arab Middle East, the Saidian approach to Orientalist discourse is thought to be validly applicable to other parts of the non-Western world, and various scholars influenced by Said have expanded his theories to include India. In *Orientalism* Said himself only occasionally refers to Orientalist discourse on India. For example, he mentions William Jones (1746–1794), the founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, who, according to Said, with his vast knowledge of Oriental peoples was the undisputed founder of scholarly Orientalism. Jones wanted to know India better than anyone in Europe, and his aim was to rule, learn and compare the Orient with the Occident. Said finds it interesting that many of the early Orientalists concentrating on India were jurisprudents like Jones or doctors of medicine with strong involvement with missionary work.

Most Orientalists had a kind of dual purpose of improving the quality of life of Indian peoples and advancing arts and knowledge back in the heart of the Empire. (Orientalism, 1977:78–79). In Said's view, the fact of the Empire was present in nearly every British nineteenth century writer's work concentrating on India. They all had definite views on race and imperialism. For example, John Stuart Mill claimed liberty and representative government could not be applied to India because Indians were civilizationally – if not racially – inferior (Ibid:14).

Said also claims that India was never a threat to Europe like Islamic Orient was. India was more vulnerable to European conquest, and, hence, Indian Orient could be treated with such proprietary hauteur without the same sense of danger affiliated with the Islamic Orient (Ibid, 75).

However, the work of Edward Said on Orientalism conceptually addresses the oppressed subaltern man and woman, to explain how the Eurocentric perspective of Orientalism produced the foundations—and the justifications—for the domination of the other, by means of colonialism. Through discourse that created an "Us" and "Them" binary social relation with which the Europeans defined themselves—by defining the differences of the Orient from the Occident.

To achieve the purpose of this paper, this paper is divided in three sections. In first section, concept of Saidian Orientalism in the light of his book, Orientalism (1977) has been critically discussed. Second section, discusses the conceptual formulation and influence in relation to concept of Orientalism with other theories. Third section analyses Indian Orientalism.

Section I

Saidian Orientalism draws on the epistemological and ontological distinction between the Orient and Occident. In general, Oreintalism, is a large masses of writers (of prose, poetry, political theory) such as Hugo, Dante, Marx have accepted East-West distinction as a foundation in their theories, themes and descriptions of the Orient and its people. To certain extent, this fact is true to Indian Orientalism essentialism, where Indian history is divided into a primeval event Vedic time as a golden age of India, and a time of degeneration of contemporary Indian society. This division is noticeable in the discursive formations concerning Indian Hinduism, this position was also adopted by nationalistic Hindu leaders and intellectuals as well (Jouhki, 2006:2).

However, Said hold accountable to Orientalist to portray Islam as a fraudulent new version of Christianity, to support his argument, he has cited variety of poetry, learned controversy and popular imposed superstition on Islam during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance age. In addition, he pointed out, "Arab, Islamic, Indian, Chinese, become repetitious pseudo-incarnations of some great Original (Christ, Europe, and the West) that they were supposed to be imitating". Said further says, 'only the

source of these rather narcissistic Western ideas about the Orient changed in time, not their character, the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined (Orientalism, 1978:175).

Said, conceptually drew on the Gramsi's concept of cultural hegemony, a form of cultural leadership, to understand Orientalism's strength and durability (Gramsi, 1977:5-6). Said cites example of Bartholeme's *Bibiliotheque Orientale*. For Said, *Bibiliotheque Orientale* represented a hegemonic oppressive apparatus, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness and into general culture (Said, 1995:5-6).

Nevertheless, Said seem more concerned in the sense of West dominating East by the power of knowledge and by building the regime of truth to establish a cultural hegemony; by creating a system of moral and epistemological rigor, by exerting a three way force, on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western consumer of Orientalism (Ibid:180). However, Said view of Orientalism have been criticized as monolithic (Clarke 1997, 9-10, Kapf 1980, 498-499, cited in Jouhki, 2006:3). Said ignored the situation of Muslims under the Ottoman Rule. Said occasionally hinted that the vast epistemological construction of Orientalist-was capable of producing its own reality, the manipulative Orientalist stereotypes could be absorbed and internalize by their subjects, rendering them ripe for Western domination-but this question was less important to him (Morrison, 2009:619).

However, Said, pointed out that since Islam presented a significant challenge to Christianity in Europe thus, consequently, Islam was stigmatised inside and outside of Europe-particularly in its Egyptian and British colonies such as India. One the on hand, Orientalism were employed to promote the Christianity, on the other hand, it was used to subjugate, to colonize the minds and hearts of the Orients-as the empirical case of India will show in the later part of this article.

Next section illustrates the conceptual connection between Orientalism (and its employment to subjugate colonies) and Colonization.

Section II

Theoretical justification of Orientalism to Colonise uncivilized

According to Said (1978), Orientalism was a western construction based on the epistemological and ontological distinction between the Orient and Occident (Ibid:25).The common denominator in all Orientalist works was that the Orient was constructed rather than objectively studied or analyzed.

Gramsci in his conception of hegemony argues that every authority attempts to replace the exercise of mere coercion with an intellectual and moral legitimacy that gives them greater stability (Gramsci, 1998:22). For Said, Orientalism was a hegemonic discourse that can be traced back from

Classical Greece (as I earlier mentioned in this paper) until the modern day and governed all European pronouncements about the Orient – whether by Sanskritists such as H.T Colebrooke, William Johns, philosopher like Hegel or literary giants such as Flaubert.

Through, his work mainly focused on British and French Orientalism in the Middle East, Said's theoretical framework has considerably influenced the work of historians studying Orientalism in the Indian context. Gyan Prakash (1990:34), for instance, argues that Orientalism was from the beginning a European enterprise with Indians as objects of knowledge. The Orientalist scholar saw Indians as outside and opposite to the European Self – the rational and materialist British and the emotional and spiritual Indian, appeared as essential and natural entities.

However, practiced and preached in order to maintain master-slave relationship with its Indian subject- British official and historian, up to certain extent, have successfully employed the concept of Orientalism. In addition, Orientalism as a form to hegemonies over the culture and society - to control the Indian illiterate women, oppressed Dalit's, rural, tribal, immigrant labourers (are part of subaltern) are have been oppression-nationalized at all the structural level-even persist in contemporary India.

Interestingly, Jouhki believe that the idea of Orientalism was held among Indian gentility and academic elite. Ideas such as Vedic times as a golden age, spiritual India, caste-centerity, Hinduism as a one religion (sort of super religion or poetic universal life philosophy) were, to some extent, Orientalist invention… (Hees, 2003, Narayan 1993, cited in Joukhi 2006:7).

In post-Independence India, Orientalism has been employed by some Indian historian, writers, novelist officials, and intellectuals. Subaltern Studies was applied as an "intervention in South Asian historiography. The term subaltern is elaborated in the work of Antonio Gramsci to refer to groups who are outside the established structures of political representation. Subaltern Studies have participated in contemporary critiques of history and nationalism, and of orientalism and Eurocentrism in the construction of social science knowledge.

In the 1970s, subaltern studies emerge to describe a new perspective of the history of an imperial colony, told from the point of view of the colonized man and woman, rather than from that of the colonizers. In this connection, literary critic Gayatri Spivak (1988:273) has advised against a too-broad application of the term subaltern. For Spivak, it is not just a classy word for "oppressed", for [the] Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference[3].

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[3] de Kock, Leon. "Interview With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa." ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature. 23(3) 1992: 29-47.

However, postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha (1990:34) emphasized the importance of social power relations in defining subaltern social groups as oppressed, racial minorities whose social presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group; as such, subaltern social groups, nonetheless, also are in a position to subvert the authority of the social groups who hold hegemonic power.

Interestingly, Ormerod (2014:21) accused the Third world citizens for self-imposition, self-defining in the term of colonial Orientalism. He observe a notion what he call 'Third world Orientalism. Ormerod argued that Indian became subject to not only evolving historical circumstances, but also the personal evolution of individuals who studied them (Ormerod, 2014:528). Even Indian scholars of Indian history often simply repeated British construct of Indian Orientalism. In rebuttal James Clifford (1994:304) points out that Said's assertion 'appear to mimic the essentializing discourse it attacks, also denying the oppressed their own historical voice (Ibid:532). Supporters and critique of Said's version of Orientalism have tended to focus the discourse between the colonisers and colonised, while ignoring the Orientalism within the traditionally oppressed global South.

Ormerod pointed out, 'The state-based approach embraced by scholars, governments and their people worldwide resulted not in Said's simple orientalist dialectic, focussed on master-servant international relations, increasingly Orientalism became the creation of identity based on comparisons between states in regard to their position of global prominence and power (Ormerod, 2014:543).

Interestingly, Bhatnagar interpret Indo-Orientalism by applying Frantz Fanon's writing, who saw colonialism in a triangular dialogue with a permanent illusory conformation that included the settler, the native and the native intellectuals. Fanon see this relationship as an Oedipal tyranny in which the colonized people search for identity and continually return to the terms of opposition set by the colonial mother (Bhatnagar 1986, 5 quotes from Fanon 1967, cited in Jouki, 2006:8).

Next section has tried to capture and analyse the image of Indian British Orientalism.

Section III

Orientalism- a case study of India

The period of Orientalism can be said to begin from 1773 with Warren Hastings being appointed the Governor General of the East India Company and extends up to 1832, when, influenced by liberal and evangelical attitudes, the East India Company government made English education compulsory in India and brought the Orientalist phase to a close (Kopf 1969:31).

East India Company (1600) come to India to domestic, Said pointed that Orientalist is outside the Orient and Orientals themselves were not permitted to participate in its production; instead, their histories, languages, and culture were recreated and appropriated by Western intellectual for their own interest (Orientalism, 1977:21-97). Nicholas Dirks and Ronal Inden remarked on this separation and deny the relevance of dialogue and collaboration in the production of knowledge under colonial hegemony, whereas Gyan Prakash is of opinion that Orientalism was a European enterprise from the very beginning. The scholars were European; the audience was European; and the Indian figured as inert objects of knowledge (Prakash, cited in Morrison, 2009:623). Similarly, to rule and to learn, to compare the Orient with Occident-the Asiatic Society of Bengal were established (Ibid:191).

Consequently, European, equipped with newly developed insight (through collected facts, artefacts and fiction) in Asia- employed this knowledge to their 'best advantage'. In the process of political domination, while shaping and defining the identity of Orient, to restore a region from its present barbarism to civilization-natives has neither been consulted not treated as anything except pre-text for a text (Ibid:199).

In order to subjugate Indian minds; serious inquiries in the field of Hindu and Muslim laws, Modern Politics, Geography of Hindustan(India) Arithmetic and Geometry, mixed science of the Asiatic, Medicine, Chemistry, Rhetoric and Morality of Asia, Music of Eastern Nations, Trade and Agricultural-have been conducted (Said, 1977:191). In addition, the Hindu moral code (Manushianta) and Hindu religious book (Bhagavadhita) have been translated, English Orientalist rewrote, distorted and manipulated the knowledge they received from their Indian interlocutors-partly through simple ignorance and misunderstanding but also to serve particular administration.

However, a growing sense of racial and cultural superiority led the British to ignore Indian informants and disregards Oriental Knowledge, this information failure to certain extent became the cause of the Indian Mutiny of 1957[4].

A genuine imposition on India with new technology and intellectual will was justified since India was considered lacking the sense of Self-government and fragmented geo-political entity (as John Stuart Mill claimed). Consequently, India, by the instruments of Western knowledge and power, was divided in the Oriental history, time, and geography as I mentioned earlier in this paper. English Orientalist established new areas specialization, new discipline; to divide, deploy, schematized, tabulate, index, and record everything in sight (and outside) to transmute living reality into the stuff of texts as Said

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[4] Bhattacharya-Panda, *Appropriation and Invention of Tradition*, 5-10, 293-253, has criticizes the notion that the production of the Hindu code personal law was a collaborative process, arguing that Brahmin pundits were involved in the translation of Hindu text, only as salaried servent and distrusted by their British masters.

expressed, 'to possess actuality mainly European nothing in the Orient seems to resist one's power (Ibid1:99).

Image of Indian Orientalism during the British Raj

Several editions of Marco Polo's travels described Kashmiri conjurors who 'bring on changes of weather and produces darkness, and do a number of things so extraordinary that no one without seeing them would believe them. (Marco Polo travel, English translation, 1579). Equally, mysterious seem to have been accounts of men being buried alive and snake charming (Captain Osbore, cited in Lamont and Bates, 2007:315).

Not only, was it assumed that the native population were more credulous than British observer, a view consistent with regular portrayal of superstitious Indians, but Indian juggling was also cited as an example of the deceptive nature of the Indian, as 'illustrating the subtle ingenuity of the Hindoos, whose national character often exhibits an ability that only wants leading in the right direction to constitute them most useful members of society.[5]

Weber has made an interesting observation related to the Oriental image of a stagnant India. Weber explained why in his view Indian civilization had not developed into encouraging rationally oriented business activity like the West. (Weber 1958, cited in Jouhnki 2006:7) Weber's India seemed to be essentially magico-religious whereas his Europe represented rationality. Weber even claimed that sciences did not progress in India because Indians had concentrated in a religion that denigrated empirical world. Weber's India was also synonymous to Hinduism, and Hinduism on its behalf was seen by Weber as an unproblematically monolithic single religion, an entity that gave India its essence. (Badrinath 1984, cited in Jouhnki 2006:7).

Needless to say above perception of India, as essentially irrational and following Said line, helped further justify British intervention aboard. In addition, popular evocation of India were displayed in the exhibition of panorama depicting imperial scenes and battles- such as Serigngapatnam (1799), the Mutiny of 1857 and the battle for Khartoum (Lamont and Bates, 2007:309). Oriental spectacles such as The Nauth Girl (Savoy Theatre, 1891), Empire of India, The Geisha and the Story of a Tea House performance- added the popular craze for Orientalia of all sorts of products, from carpets tom cushions and teas to shampoo, and such performances contributed to a general sense of wonder of the mysterious East. In such performances, India was presented as place of exoticism and elegance, and where the Indians appeared only as servants (Mackenzie, cited in Lamont and Bates, 2007:308).

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[5] R.V. Russell, Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, vol. III (London, 1916. The veracity of the Hindus was regularly questioned in colonial documents, and accusations of fraud continued to made against jugglers, fakirs, and yogis by

On the one hand, description and interpretation of Vedanta philosophy as an 'essentially mystical' reflects the western prejudices and the Orientalist discourse provided an 'Other' by which the rational western Self could be compared favourably, on the other hand, Western intellectuals and literary historian have been keen to point out, for example, in their studies of the influences of the exotic Orient on idealist philosophy and the Romantic literary imagination (Inden, cited in Lamont and Bates, 2007:311).

Not only, the Oriental ideas of difference and division from the colonial time have affected-or perhaps, infected-the foundation of public life in India including the relationship between Hindu and Muslims, but also, during the national movement of India, Orientalist texts were used to evoke the national self-identity and nationhood (Clark 1997, cited in Jouhki 2006:7). According to Brickenridge and van der Veer (cited in Jouhki 2006:7-8) the consequent "internal Orientalism" seems to have most problematic issues in postcolonial India. The Orientalist habits and categories still have such power that is exceedingly difficult for Indian or outsider to view India without reverting to the outdate discourse.

In this connection, essentialization and somatization of different group differences, claiming the Breckinridge and van der Veer (1994:12), is probably the most damaging part of the orientalist bequest to post-colonial politics- a situation in contemporary India, where a political group is in dire straits in to constitute itself on the basis of shared interest without others thinking the interest are only the disguise for religious, caste or sectarian interest.

However, Morrison (2009:619), illustrate as how the innovative use of the colonial knowledge, once employed by the colonial state on a mass scale begin to transform colonized societies, such as legal system and the role of the Neo-Orientalisation of Indian society in the early nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, it hard to deny the fact that once British India and, now contemporary India is indeed under the influence of Orientalism (in Saidian term-more or less) where a segment of Indian elites, and historian are motivated to construct and filter the knowledge to maintain the status-quo in society as Gayatri Spivak has warned us(1988:273).

Finally, facts above confirmed the hypothesis that India, to some extent, was indeed the victims of Orientalism (in Saidian term). However, in post-Independence India, the Saidain form of Orientalism manifested in different form- where a new kind of Orientalism, a political cultural hegemony, where few Indian elite and intellectual replaced their British master to subjugate the minds of vast majority of poor and vulnerable groups of society.

Orientalist chroniclers of Caste. For one British biographer, Hindus were naturally a suspicious race,, their instinct is to mislead, and they have raised dissimulation to a fine art (See Codell and Macleod

Conclusion

This article reviewed Saidian concept of Orientalism and critically discussed its aspect. It has examined various discourses related to the concept of Orientalism, and noted some consistent pattern and evidence supporting Orientalism (in Saidian term). Finally, it considered the Indian case of Orientalism under the British Raj, with its different characters, characteristics and its impact on Indian physic. By grounding the Saidian Orientalism, article looked as various dimensions of Orientalism employed by the Indian intellectuals in constructing the national identity and maintaining the cultural hegemony over marginalized in Indian society. Thus, it can be said, Indian Orientalism (not exactly in Saidian term) is still alive-only the master and geographical relations have been shifted from Europe to India.

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