

THE ORIENTAL ISSUES AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

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Edward Said's most arguable and influential book *Orientalism* was published in 1978 and has inspired countless appropriations and confutation from scholars around the world and it continues to shape the ways in which literary studies, Middle East studies, East and South Asian studies, architecture, politics, history, anthropology and related disciplines are conceptualized and practiced. Said's work had a great impact on thought about the colonial discourse and which particularly influenced discussion on Orientalism. *Colonial discourse theory* is that theory which analyses the discourse of colonialism and colonisation; which demonstrates the way in which points out the deep ambivalence of as well as the way in which it constructs both colonising and colonized subjects (Ashcroft, 2007:15). The ground of Post-colonial studies would not be what it is today without the work of Edward Said. The work of Said makes a very influential statement on the nature of identity formation in the Postcolonial and presents, a new understanding of the links between text or critic and their material context. The term, Postcolonialism means to propose both resistance to the *colonial* and its discourses continue to form cultures whose revolutions have overthrown by formal ties to their former colonial rulers. This ambiguity owes a good deal to post-structuralist linguistic theory as it has influenced and been transformed by the three most powerful Postcolonial critics Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha.

Postcolonial theory is often said to begin with the work of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakraverty Spivak. Edward Said's *Orientalism* shaped a new way of theorizing the last few centuries, when the imperialist West constructed the colonies as unusual cultural economic and political objects, needing to civilizing effect of the master race(McLead,2010). Orientalism is a very important and crucial role plays in the studies and development of Postcolonial criticism and literature. Postcolonial criticism has embraced a number of aims: most

fundamentally, to reexamine the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized; to determine the economic on both the colonized people and the colonizing power (Habib, 2006:738). Orientalism has given a sharp force and power to Postcolonial critic and writers for their writing. Orientalism is the term used by Edward Said for the assessment of the attitudes and perspectives of the Western scholars or Orientalists to legitimize colonial aggression by intellectually marginalized and dominated Eastern peoples. Edward Said exposes how the West from the 18th century had undertaken systematic and purposeful misrepresentation and denigration of the glorious Orient through their work. These concepts were given a new twist by Edward Said in his *Orientalism*.

Orientalism is itself a discourse that focused on the power, knowledge, representation and the various Postcolonial issues. He uses term ‘Orientalism’ to represent a Western tradition, both academic and artistic, of unreceptive and critical views of the East or Orient, composed by the attitudes of European imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The relationship and issues between the Orient (East) and Occident (West) are the main points to discuss in Said’s Orientalism. Orientalism makes a comment on the imitation or interpretation of aspects of Eastern backgrounds, societies and their cultures in the Western world by a number of writers. Edward Said defines ‘Orientalism’ in his book *Orientalism* as:

“Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience.” (Said, 2003:1)

Furthermore, he defines Orientalism in the same book as follows:

“Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident".” (Said, 2003:2)

It could be argued that from Said’s perspective: Orientalism is a style of thinking which is based on the study of existence and epistemological difference made between the Eastern and most of the time, the Western. Orientalism was also a concept in the art history concerning generally to the work of artists who were concerned with France in the nineteenth century, especially, in

subject matter, style, colour, etc. referred to during their travel to the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the Western Asia. Orientalism demonstrates how power operates knowledge that is reflected in the discourse of the Orientalist in their writing and action against the Orient. Perhaps, Edward Said has focused the Oriental discourses that are constructed or produced by the Orientalist in their writing. Mohanty has minutely examined the Orientalism in his book *Orientalism: A Critique* and mainly writes about Orientalism as:

Orientalism as a body of knowledge had its specific methodological rigidity. The Orientalist discourses become a political tool for educating and directing its practitioners to adopts its limited methodologies and follows a well defined set of objectifies. Orientalism as a structurally coherent and effective discourse can be analyzed on the basis of its methodological economy. The ideological, epistemological and cultural complexities of Orientalism can be simplified at the level of its methodology (Mohabty, 2005:62).

Orientalists are those who, following the predetermined Orient in their Western mind tried to learn about it. Thus they become the part of the creators of the Orient. The supposed to be discoverers are themselves the inventors of the Orient. And the modern Orientalists who tried to categories the different aspect of the Orient become themselves another addition of such inventors. Said's own identity is crucial in his analysis of those Orientalist texts which constructed the Orient and thus constructed Europe's dominance over it.

Orient is a set of imagination, values, ideas, geographical locations which can be seen as the result of many attempts to explain self identity in terms of making an Orient. Actually Orient is a concept produced or constructed by the Westerner/Europeans. Said has used the new kind of methodology to bring the whole matter related to Orientalism in to the light. He has clarified that: Orientalism is not an inert fact nature - i.e. it is not only related to geographical reality. It would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was essentially an idea or a formation with no corresponding reality. Edward Said says so because he knows that the geographical sectors as Orient and Occident are manmade, but along with that there is 'a brute reality' (Said: 2003:5) which is exerted by the ideas of Orient if at all any such Orient exists in ideas. Edward Said does not have to face a feeling of the painful self-consciousness of considering how the Western and Eastern scholars interacted with each other and how this interaction could influence the thought

and culture of both. In Orientalism, with considerable intensity, that Western scholarship on the Orient has been closely attached to Western or European political power over the Orient (East), especially in the epoch of colonialism and also focuses on the Islamic Orient and English and French representation of it.

Orientalism has constructed binary division or binary opposition: Orient and Occident. Orient and Occident are represented the relationship of colonized and Colonizer likes Orient as colonized and Occident as colonizer. For example, a colonizer exploits the coloniased people similarly Occident exploits the knowledge in the Orient (East). The Orient shows a system of representations structured by political forces that brought the Orient into Western consciousness, Western knowledge, and Western empire. The Orient exists for the West, and is constructed by and in relation to the West. It is a mirror image of what is inferior, marginal and strange or "Other" to the West. In Orientalism, East and West are positioned through the construction of *unequal* dichotomy. The West occupies a superior rank while the Orient is its 'other' in a subservient position (McLand, 2010:41). Said has made the claim that the whole of Western European and American scholarship, literature, and cultural representation and stereotype creates and reinforces prejudice against non-Western (Orient) cultures, putting them in the categorization of Oriental (or "Others"). The spirit of the matter in understanding Orientalism is this power relationship and how the Orientalist or Occident has used and continues to use and understand the Orient on its own terms.

To summing up, the discussion about the Orientalism and its discourse in the reference to Postcolonial theory and criticism. Indeed, Orientalism is an initial or foundational text of the Postcolonial theory and studies. Orientalism is an ideological discourse with severally bounded boarders, which regularly influenced on postcolonial critics and writers. Edward Said says about the Orientalism as:

"a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient" (Edward, 2003:203)

It is the image of the Orient expressed as a whole system of thought and scholarship. Orientalism talks about the approach of Europeans or Western intellectuals in the direction of the East, and in particular toward the Middle East or Islamic countries. Said has argued in *Orientalism* that the Westerners have an inadequate concept of the Middle East and its culture and history. Perhaps the Orientalist or European has consciously or unconsciously and purposefully misrepresented and spreading misunderstanding about Orient in West.

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