

ORIENTALISM: POST COLONIAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: *Postcolonial generally refers to writings or culture of nations, which were once colonized by European powers. Post-Colonial theory is an attempt to uncover the ideologies in European texts about the 'Other'- 'Orient'. It also looks at the colonial strategies of representation of native; the feminization, marginalization and dehumanization of the native; the rise of nationalists discourse; the psychological effects of the colonialism on both the colonizer and colonized. Postcolonial theory may be said to have originated in the mid-twentieth century texts of Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Albert Memme and Edward W. Said's work 'Orientalism' (1978) was a central text in this area.*

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Orientalism pertains to the orient as discovered, recorded, described, defined and 'invented' by Europe and the West. As far as literature is concerned it refers to the discourse by the West about the East – "the European construction of the East" as primitive, pagan, undeveloped, uncivilized and criminal. Such a construction enabled the European to construct and to justify his presence. The poor and native needed to be governed and developed and it was the task of the European to do so. European divided the world into two parts; the East and the West or the Orient and the Occident or the civilized and the uncivilized. This was totally an artificial boundary and it was laid on the bars of the concept of them and us or theirs and ours. The Europeans used orientalism to define themselves. Some particular attributes were associated with the Orientals and whatever the Orientals weren't the Occident were. The European defined them as superior race compared to the Orientals and they justified their colonization by this concept. This prejudice was also found in the orientalist and all their scientific research and reports were under the influence of this. The generalized attributes associated with the Orientals can be seen even today. For example the Arabs are defined as uncivilized people and Islam is seen as religion of the terrorist. The identity of the native is what the colonial discourse generates and the native assimilates. It is this process that helps colonialism attain and retain its control. The empire was kept not through coercion but Phenomenon of Orientalism occupies three overlapping domains:

- It designates first the 4000 years of history of cultural relations between Europe and Asia.
- The scientific discipline producing specialists in oriental language and culture from the early 19th century.
- The long terms images, stereotypes and general ideology about the orient as the "Other", constructed by generations of Western scholars.

Orientalism depends upon all these aspects culturally constructed distinction between the occident and the orient.

Orientalism as discourse is believed to have begun its formal existence with the decision of Church Council of Vienne in 1312 to found a series of chairs in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac at Oxford, Paris, Bologna and Salamanca. Macco Polo (1254-1324) is a prime example of an author who began to introduce the east to the west with his immensely popular book of travels which was translated into many European languages. But the early in the 17th century, Orientalism as a discourse was well under way. The rise and spread of Islam had threatened Christianity and led to the Crusaders, thus bringing East nearer to the west. Sir William Jones, one of the first great British Orientalists , translated many works from Arabic and Persian and these were to influence the oriental themes of romantic poets such as Byron , Southey , and Thomas Moore .

Outstanding French orientalists were Abraham - Hyacinthe Anquetil-Durperron (1758-1838) and Louis Massignon who made invaluable contributions in the interwar period 20th century. French poets and the Novelists were particularly attracted to and influenced by Orient, especially Chateaubriand who was responsible for fabricating and projecting a romantic view of it. He is the same 'invented' an 'Orient' which suited him what Stendhal called his 'stinking egoism'. In the 20th c. miscellaneous British novelists – Kipling, E. M. Forster, Aunthony Burgess, Paul Scott and J.G. Farrell, for example- attempted to depict the British and the Asians under the imperial figure. As a result of the circumstances 'Orientalism' by Said, that has been highly influential in postcolonial studies. In the book, Said writes that Orientalism is a constellation of false assumptions underlying Western attitudes towards the Middle East.

Edward Said's major contribution was to see colonialism as rooted in an epistemological inquiry and project, constructing the orient. 'Orientalism is European construction of the east' as primitive, savage, pagan, undeveloped, uncivilized and criminal. Such a construction enabled the European to justify his presence. The poor native weak needed to be governed and developed and it was the task of the European to do so. Oriental reality is interpreted in particular ways , the ways that are usable by the European .Thus , *Hindu* and Islamic religious text and beliefs are constructed within these discourse as pagan primitive and requiring reform.

Europe and the Orient were discursively represented in literature and history as binary apposite. Europe was all that the orient was not: developed Christian and civilized. Europe saw the orient as different and treated this different as negative. European identity was established only because it had the East to contrast itself with or the orient was integral to the very formation of a European identity. Apart from Edward Said's highly original critical analysis, there have been many scholarly works in recent years. Of special note are –

- a) Raymond Schwab's 'La Renaissance Orientale' (1950)
- b) Jonathan W. Fuck's 'Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts'.(1955)

c) Dorathy Metlitzki's 'The matter of Araby in England' (1977). Plus traditional type books by such authors as Freya Stark, Wilfred Thesiger, Colin Thubron and V.S. Naipaul, whose excursion into Islam, 'Among the Belivers' (1981), is a considered attempt to assess Islamic movements and feelings today.

Orientalism by Edward W. Said, appeared in 1978, has acquired the aura and significance of a classic for taking up the courage to debunk most of the major European arguments and exposing the hidden agenda of imperialism to construct the orient through willful composition of *text*. European divided the world into two parts; the *east and the west* or the *occident and the orient or the civilized and the uncivilized*. Europeans used orientalism to define themselves. Some particular attributes were associated with the orientals and whatever the Orientals weren't the occident were. The oriental was about a European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscape remarkable experiences. It is a fact that since old days of Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton, Shelley, Wordsworth, Thackeray, Dickens, Tennyson and numerous.

Other authors, India, Africa and the orient in general has been represented on the one hand as places of mysterious practices, life styles and customs, tempting lands where people were uncivilized, uneducated and ignorant. With the end of World War II all of the Europeans colonies were lost and it was believed that there were no more orientals and occidentals but this was surely not the case. Western prejudice towards the eastern countries was still very explicit and often they managed to generalize most of the eastern countries because of it. For example Arabs were often represented as cruel and violent people. Japanese were always associated with Karate whereas the Muslims were always considered to be terrorists. This goes on to show that even with increasing globalization and awareness, such bias was found in the people of the developed countries.

Thirty years later 'Orientalism' still offers a valuable insights into our understanding of the enigmatic relations between the east and the west, the orient and the occident and its significance lies in strengthening the postcolonial theory by opening up a new era of study of the enigmatic relations between western representatives of civilization and modernization and their colonies, annexed mostly in the east which they kept under their domination by various means of operation as long as they could.

Orientalism is especially pertaining to the Orient as discovered, recorded, described, defined, produced and 'invented' by Europe and the west. As far as literature is concerned it refers to the discourse by the West about the East- "European construction of the East". It is shown that how discourse and rhetoric, language and writing were essential to the colonial project because writing and rhetoric are ideological. The ideology of empire required certain forms of discourse to support and justify it and orientalism was this discourse.

'Orientalism' is a style of thinking a form of representation that created opinions, ideas and images of the non European culture in racialized ways so that – the East was always constructed negatively with Europe and it justified the colonial presence in the East.

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