



Orientalism, Occidentalism and Islamophobia Deconstructing “the other” A Case Study of East vs. West

Durrani Mahak Fatima

Department of International Relations, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Pakistan
mehak.7@hotmail.com

Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 23rd August 2015, revised 1st January 2016, accepted 2nd March 2016

Abstract

West and East can never be amalgamated; if one is the sky other is the earth. East and West for centuries have tried to prove themselves superior in culture, language, economy and military, both living in the past and trying to make their present and future glorious. East for eight centuries ruled in Europe and left their magnificent wonders and marks on the World. West has the power to define things and has influence all over the world. They know how to define things, how to defend themselves and how to prove other's narrative wrong. Since the rise of West, even the knowledge has become the product of power and is transferred from West to East, while the East's narratives are ignored. The war of the Orient and Occident can never be diminished as they are each other's other. Hence they need each other for their existence and survival to define their own subsistence but they can never be own same page. Orient (East) was once the Ruler but now the indirect subjugate and satellite of West, while in the past Occident (West) was subjugate of East. West has the most insecure humans which are afraid of sleeping East and Islamic Civilization, and wanted to disorder Islamic World so that they can never arise in front of them.

Keywords: Orientalism, Occidentalism, Satellite, Puppet Regime, Islamophobia.

Introduction

“We are the other of the other”.

Marcus Aurelius

Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all when the witch in the mirror constructs her image as the most beautiful lady, while perceiving others the ugliest. Mirror tells the reality then; Famed is thy beauty, Majesty. But hold, a lovely maid I see. Rags cannot hide her gentle grace. Alas, she is fairer than thee, she is snow white. Snow white and the seven dwarfs; a story which tells narcissist behaviour, jealousy, the construction and perception of human beings¹. “Self” is meaningless without “Other”. In the real world, and on the stage of politics, nations construct images and perceptions. They considered themselves as self and construct “Others”. Others are the opposite of self, and self can never be identified or defined without “Other”. “Others” are constructed in order to identify “Self” and roots. “Self” is the mirror of soul, while “Others” are the shadow of “Self”. “Self” needs “Others” to survive, prosper and flourish. God has sown the seeds of “Self” and “Other” in human so that they can differentiate themselves, so that they can rise and fall.

Everything is mortal. Everything has to face decay except the truth, facts and reality. But in the world of fabrication, pretensions and perceptions, reality has vanished. Humans are chasing the shadows of reality. Image and perception took birth which are mere the shades of reality. No one knows now what

reality is; only half truths are known which are even more fatal than the lies. Nietzsche once said “there are no facts; only interpretations”. Nations perceive and interpret “Others”. It is very important how they construct the image of “Others” and then how they behave with them.

Theoretical framework

This study intends to deal with the theory of deconstruction described by Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction is the technique of critical analysis of philosophical and literary texts. In this article, orientalism and Occidentalism are deconstructed to find the “Other” and boundaries of differences between them.

Research Question

The Other in East and West can never be diminished. They were different and will remain different even after the globalization.

Orientalism and Occidentalism (Deconstructing the Other)

Rudyard Kipling says “Oh East is east, and West is west, and never the twain shall meet”.

In this world of boundaries, divisions and borders, Orient is “Other” for Occident and vice versa. Without Orient, Occident can never be identified, defined or differentiated. Orient, the

western image of east, the Muslim World, the Arab world, which always fascinated the Occident which is the Western World. Orient is not mere the image, it's the centre of culture, the pioneer of religion, the hub of economy, the way of living of East, defined and represented by the West, the Occident. Orient was the reflection of how the West (Occident) perceived East (Orient). Orient and Occident can never be the same and can never meet like sky and earth. But they are opposite like day and night, love and hate, down and fall. They both are present to define and differentiate each other. In fact Orient was the source to define Occident. It is said you can see only what you have inside you and reality is what we see. In the world of prejudices and biases, a man can never be rational, west perceived the "Orient" with their own interpretations and the construction of image. Orient took birth before Occident in 16th century and before when east was the centre of fascination for all the foreigners and invaders.

East for centuries remained rich in cultures, tales, fables, religions, myths, art and languages and its ties were connected deep to its roots. Orient, the Arab world (Islamic civilization) and the south region like china and India was famous for its civilization, culture, religion and literature. West (Occident) derived their culture and spirit from the Orient world. Orientalism is the study of ontology and epistemology which differentiates both Orient and Occident¹. Edward Said (Occidental writer) first coined the term orientalism and critically analysed the western imperialism, behaviour, superiority hidden behind the term orientalism².

History of the Orient (Islamic Civilization)

There were the Mahometans (Moors of Spain) who transmitted sciences to the Occident; since then, they have never wished to take benefit of what they had given us. Islamic civilization started with the fall of Roman which is sometimes called as Byzantine Empire. Civilization rise with Asabiyyah (cohesion) and each has seed of downfall within it but every nation marked its glorious memories on the page of history³. Islamic Civilization is one such civilization which ruled the world for almost 800 years. They were great philosophers, writers, poets, scientists, doctors, architectures, painters, warriors and law makers. Islamic civilization was the hub of invention and discovery. Wherever they invade and conquer, they derive knowledge from the new place. Since Islamic civilization was the centre of knowledge and power. Orientals were never territorial colonial masters. They were driven by their curiosity and hunger for knowledge. Where ever they takeover, they learn new things from the new lands.

They brought Arabic numeral system to Europe from India, they brought irrigation system, and they brought new fruits and vegetables like pomegranate, oranges, spices and silk which were never seen by Europeans before. Islamic literature was one of the best literature in the world, e.g. One thousand One nights (which attracted the whole world and was translated into

many languages fascinated the whole Europe, in fact the whole world with its tales and stories woven with moral values and culture. Islamic poets were very eloquent in their poetry and expressions like Omer Khayyam and his Rubaiyyat. Muslims were the first to bring paper to the Europe from China. Muslims invented many things and they were practical rather than only focusing on theoretical work. They were the first who made watch, clock, gunpowder, compass to navigate in seas and deserts. They were the first to create telescope, Giralda or "The Tower of Seville", was the first laboratory in Europe. It was constructed in 1190 A.D., in the Spanish town of Seville under the command of the renowned Mathematician, Jabir Ibn Afiah. It was meant for the observation of heavenly bodies. It was later twisted into a belfry by Christian conquerors, who, after the eviction of the Moors, did not know how to use it. The Muslims made countless discoveries and wrote countless Books about Medicine, Surgery, biology, Chemistry, Physics, Philosophy, Astrology, Geometry and numerous other fields. Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi was a Persian mathematician, geographer, astrologer, astronomer and a scholar in the House of Wisdom in Baghdad. He was born in Persia around 780. Al-Khwarizmi was one of the knowledgeable men who worked in the House of Wisdom. The House of Wisdom was a scientific research and education centre. Al-Khwarizmi developed the concept of the algorithm in mathematics. AL-Khwarizmi's algebra is acknowledged as the basis and keystone of the sciences.

He was the inventor of "algebra," and his work was entitled Hisab al-Jabr wa-al-Muqabala⁴. Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Battuta was a Moroccan Muslim intellectual and traveller. He is known for his traveling and going on expeditions called the Rihla. His voyages continued for a period of almost thirty years. This covered nearly the whole of the known Islamic world and beyond, extending from West Africa, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Southern Europe in the West, to the Middle East, Central Asia, Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and China in the East, a distance eagerly exceeding that of his ancestors. After his travel he came to Morocco and gave his account of the experience to Ibn Juzay. He first began his journey by travelling the lands of the fascinating Middle East. And then he navigated down the Red Sea to Mecca. He crossed the huge Arabian Desert and travelled to Iraq and Iran. Abu Walid Mohammad Ibn Rushd born in 1128 C.E. in Cordova has been known as one of the greatest intellectuals and researchers of the history. A creation of twelfth-century Islamic Spain, he set out to assimilate Aristotelian philosophy with Islamic thought. A common theme throughout his writings is that there is no inaptness between religion and philosophy when both are correctly understood. Omar Khayyam was one of the main astronomers and mathematicians of the primitive period. He was recognised as the author of the most significant treatise on algebra before contemporary times. Khayyam's poetic work has concealed his eminence as a mathematician.

He has engraved about a thousand four-line verses or quatrains. In the English-speaking world, he was familiarized through the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam which are rather free-wheeling English translations by Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883). Jabbar bin Hayyan another Muslim scientist also acknowledged as Geber. He was known as the father of Arab chemistry famous for his highly significant works on alchemy and metallurgy. He also invented sulphuric acid and hydrochloric acid. Ibn e Ishaq al Kundi one of the best scientist also known as Alkindus. He was an Arab philosopher and scientist, who is known as the first of the Muslim roaming philosophers. Ibn al Haytham also well-known as Alhazen was Arab astronomer and mathematician known for his important offerings to the principles of optics and the use of scientific experiments. IbnZuhr in west known as Avenzoar was Arab surgeon and physician, known for his persuasive book *Al-Taisir Fil-MudawatWal-Tadbeer* (Book of Simplification Concerning Therapeutics and Diet). Ibn e Khaldun was Arab historiographer and historian who established one of the earliest nonreligious philosophies of history. Often deliberated as one of the forerunners of contemporary historiography, economics and sociology. IBN AL-BAITAR was Arab scientist and physician who analytically recorded the findings made by Islamic physicians in the middle Ages. Abu Nasr Muhammad al- Farabi, one of the initial Islamic intelligentsias who were instrumental in conveying the doctrines of Aristotle and Plato to the Muslim world, had a considerable inspiration for the later Islamic philosophers such as Avicenna. He was an exceptional linguist who translated the Greek works on Aristotle and Plato and made a significant embellishments to them of his own³.

When the Islamic civilization was on the height and peak the Europe was doomed in the darkness of ignorance and wars. Muslims brought the knowledge of Roman and Greek empires to the Europe. They were unaware of everything and were under the papacy of Church. They were not aware of science and any kind of knowledge. Even they don't know that the earth was round not flat. Islamic civilization was the largest military, administrative and cultural empire on earth. Christopher Columbus was the one who went to the journey of India but reached America as Christian missionary. Muslims marked their memories all over the world. Their palaces like Alhambra Palace is the beautiful mark of their glorious past. Over the years Crusade were fought between the Muslims and the Christians. When the Christians entered they destroyed the books and libraries of Muslims and ferociously killed the innocents they destroyed the imperial library of Constantinople. On the other hand Mongols destroyed everything of the Baghdad. House of wisdom was destroyed by Mongols invaders in Baghdad.

Orient vs. Occident

Edward Said in his book "orientalism" says the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and the Occident. According to him, Orientalism was the distribution of

geopolitical awareness into the aesthetic, sociological, historical, economic and philological texts. It was a discourse which had direct relation with political knowledge and power. The Orient was the land of magic, myths, treasure and wisdom for the occident. For centuries west remained in the Arab romanticism and fascination. But it is said every rise has a fall every pride has a fall. Each civilization has to fall and they sow the seeds of decay themselves. When the roots wither, and identity is forgotten, nations lost their path of glory. It is for sure, Orient was defined by the occident in Europe as Militant, fanatic, terrorist, fundamentalist and exotic land². Occident was the Christian territory under the papacy rule and so their justifications and interpretations of Orient was according to their own whims and wishes.

Orient was constructed by West and was used to define their own national identity. Nations always need "Others" to define themselves; they need enemies outside to rise within. Nexus of power and knowledge created the Orient. Occidentals after the fall of Islamic civilization always considered themselves superior to Orientals. It is said "As long as the history is written by the hunter a lion can never be glorified", so it had happened to the Orient world, it's the forgotten chapter of history, west has never admired the Muslim Empire and civilization however they were inspired by it. They distorted the history of Orient world and perceived the Orient with prejudices and discrimination. Gustave Flaubert once said, there is no truth, there is only perception. It was not the reality rather the construction, imagination and perception of the West to define Orient like that. It reminds the cave of allegory by Plato in which prisoners were chained and unable to turn their heads. They can only see the wall of cave, behind them a fire was burning, between the prisoners and fire there was a parapet, along which the puppeteers can walk. The puppeteers, who were behind the prisoners, hold up puppets that casted shadows on the wall of the cave. The prisoners were inept to see those puppets, the real objects, which were passing behind them. What the prisoners saw and heard were shadows and echoes casted by objects that they would not see. Psyche Roxas Mendoza says Reality is constructing, you are what you think you are". West constructed Orient and defined them as Berbers, ferocious and uncivilized after the fall of Islamic civilization.

Orientalism, Occidentalism and Islamophobia

"If you don't know who you are, you will never know what belongs to you!"

Dr. Gail Hayes

A nation can never forget the glorious past; they have the imagined territory, the imagined beautiful heaven which they always wanted to achieve together. Muslim world has lost its identity and suffering from identity crisis. Muslim world has the historical residue of glorious past 800 years, which they wanted to achieve in the 21st century, while West has the phobia of Islam which they never wanted to prosper and flourish. West

always misrepresented the Muslim world with the stereotypic images and always tarnished their identity. West not only penetrated inside the Muslim or the Orient world and changed their culture and identity⁵. From Politics to Hollywood, West has defined Muslim world with their own whims and wishes. They presented Arabs and Muslims as dishonest, terrorist, exotic, evil, cunning, fanatic, fundamentalist and orthodox. It is in the human nature, when they are afraid of something or are threatened they demonize “Others”. They perceive others as their enemies⁶.

West has always shown their images in Hollywood as the fanatics, dark coloured and violent while their females as white and exotic, whether in Disneyland cartoons like Aladdin, Ali baba and forty thieves, Azure and Azmar or in the movies like Kingdom of Heaven, American sniper, Syria, exotic image of Arab female in Arabian nights (2000) etc. Even in Aladdin Disney (1992-1993) song, the first verse was like that
Oh I come from a land, from a faraway place
Where the caravan camels roam
Where they cut off your ear
If they don't like your face
It's barbaric, but hey, it's home.



Source: <http://www.funzug.com/index.php/paintings/paintings-of-the-arab-world.html>

Figure-1
Depiction of East (Orientalism)



Source: <http://www.rotoscopers.com/2013/08/30/disneys-aladdin-heads-to-broadway-group-bookings-now-open/>

Figure-2
Depiction of Arab world in Disney Cartoons



Source: <http://www.rotoscopers.com/2013/08/30/disneys-aladdin-heads-to-broadway-group-bookings-now-open/>

Figure-3

Exotic Arab Romanticism and Arab culture displayed in the Disneyland cartoons

West always was afraid of the Orient, and they were remaining each other's enemies, almost half of the wars of world are fought between the orient and occident to prove them. No doubt west has penetrated deep into the roots of Muslim culture but are afraid to cope with their spirit and talent, their valour and their knowledge. Muslims are like sleeping lions for them, if they wake they will shake the earth. In the thesis of Sameul P. Huntington, "the clash of civilizations" says that West has tried to westernize the whole world but failed as Islam will remain Islam and west will remain west. They both had the 1400 year old history of rivalry. They could apparently change their culture but they will remain Islamic and the fault lines will remain between them⁷. After the 9/11 incident the media representation of Arab by West has turned hostile and waged wars in the Muslim world. They killed thousands of Muslims in Iraq, Sudan, Chechnia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Burma, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Jordan etc. they established puppet regimes in the Arab world to exploit their resources and to sell their arms and weapons there. Middle East being the largest consumer of weapons and arms buy it from the largest producer America, but it's thought provoking, that if

there would be peace how they would sell their arms and weapons. West being the largest consumer of oil, not only captivated the oil rich areas but also spread chaos on these regions, so that the Muslims can never be able to rise in front of them. In the book "Next Hundred Years" it is described that west will never spare east to rise in front of them. If it is viewed that in the beginning of the twenty- first century as the dawn of the American Age (superseding the European Age), it can be seen that it began with a group of Muslims seeking to re- construct the Caliphate—the great Islamic empire that once ran from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Inescapably, they had to strike at the United States in an attempt to draw the world's primary power into war, trying to reveal its weakness in order to trigger an Islamic uprising. The United States responded by invading the Islamic world. But its goal wasn't victory. It wasn't even clear what victory would mean. Its goal was simply to disorder the Islamic world and set it against itself, so that an Islamic empire could not arise. The United States doesn't need to win wars. It needs to simply disrupt things so the other side can't build up sufficient strength to challenge it. In the end the writer predicts, in the Islamic world, Turkey is a politically

stable country with the seventeenth largest economy and a largest army which was once the centre of Ottoman Empire, can give tough time to US in future⁸. The Arab world today is an intellectual, political, social and cultural satellite of U.S. With the increasing globalization, Arabs especially leaders are highly diversified consumers of US products, material or ideology. West has somehow succeeded to change the Orient world into Occident through Hollywood, products like Coca cola and jeans. Arab and the whole Islamic world is now hooked into western Market system. But according to Homi K. Bhabha, Globalization has turned the societies into ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity, they are now new products, e.g. Muslims wear jeans, drink cola but pray in Mosques. They are apparently changed but internally connected to their past and roots. So West has failed in sense to westernize the Orient⁹. As orient will remain Orient and West will remain west, a boundary of "Other" would never be diminished between them. West being the most insecure nation on earth would perceive and create enemies in the Orient and will remain under the Islamophobia.

Conclusion

West knows the East will rise one day, as it is mentioned in their Holy books. They know the last war on earth will again a Crusade. From 1400 years, West and East waged the maximum wars on earth. They can never be same and can never unite. West in 21st century again associated the terms like terrorists, uncivilized and barbarians with Muslims. West almost controls 80% of the media and so tarnished the Image of Muslim world. West almost intervened in every country of Muslim World and

exploited their resources. They are afraid Islam will rise one day.

References

1. Jeanne-Marie (1991). *Leprince de Beaumont. Beauty and the Beast*, movie.
2. Said Edward W. (2003). *Orientalism*. Penguin Books.
3. Dir. Timothy Copestake, Perf. BettanyHughes, Prod (2008). *Timothy Copestake. When moors ruled the Europe*, movie.
4. Geographic National (2012). *1001 Inventions: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Civilization*. 3rd Edition. National Geographic Society.
5. Morgan Michael (2008). *Lost History: The Enduring Legacy of Muslim Scientists, Thinkers and Artists*. Reprint edition. National Geographic Society.
6. Woltering Robbert (2011). *Occidentalisms in the Arab World: Ideology and Images of the West in the Egyptian Media*. Tauris Academic Studies, I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd., London.
7. Huntington Samuel P. (2002). *The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of World Order*. Free Press, Newyork.
8. Friedman George (2009). *Next 100 Years*. ALLISON and BUSBY; POLS edition.
9. Bhabha Homi K. (2004). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, London.