

CONCLUSION

With their diverse motives and objectives, Orientalists have always been working on Islam in general and on the *sīrah* of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) in particular generating an academic discipline known as Orientalism. Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) life still continues to attract an increasing numbers of biographers especially in Western hemisphere. The general notion that the original motive behind the works of Orientalists are purely academic, contradicts with the actual fact. The history and whole development of Orientalism clearly demonstrate that despite the academic purpose, the mainstream of Orientalism was motivated by religious and political objectives that still target the religious and political order of Islam.

This discourse from the very early period up to the Modern era was predominantly Christian-led. The language and Orientalists' perception regarding Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) were primarily concerned with the alleged falseness of the revelation on Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

Scholars unanimously agree that Orientalism sprang from the Churches and developed under their patronage. The pioneer Orientalists were affiliated to the Churches, like French priests, Gerbert who became the head of Vatican in 999 C.E.; Selfester the second; Peter the respected, who passed away in 1156 C.E.; Gerald Cremona who died in 1189 C.E.; Peter Ricardo who expired in 1320 C.E.; and Johanna Ouscourby who died in 1456 C.E.; etc. Most of the Oriental institutions in Europe were founded by Christian priests and cardinals, like the institute of Oriental Languages of France, which was founded by Pope Honorius the Fourth in 1285 C.E. Sorbonne University, was founded by the famous French priest De Sorbo. The reconstruction of that University was also due to efforts of another priest Richesco in 1626 C.E. The famous Spanish Oriental Institute was founded by Bishop Raymond the First in 1130 C.E. The Marony College of Rome was built by Pope Gregarius in 1584 C.E. The foundation stone of School of Oriental Languages in Florence, Italy, was laid by Cardinal Di Medici and so on. The deep relation between Orientalists and the Church discloses the religious motive behind the movement of Orientalism. Many Orientalists themselves confess the existence of religious motives behind the organization.

These Orientalists formulated history according to their own (Western) understanding fulfilling their vested interests and ignored the Muslim understanding of history. In order to diffuse and distort the meaning of divine history as Muslims believe God, tried to demonstrate and locate faults in *sīrah* and the *Sīrat al Mustaqīm* (the straight path).

The aim of all this was the character assassination of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). If this could be achieved, the validity of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) would be discredited. Such substantiated generalizations were believed in the West and used by missionaries, except some Orientalist who were just and presented right approach to Islam. Scholars looked down upon ‘subjective’ attitudes and pretended to be ‘objective’. But in spite of such a frontage their deep-seated prejudices could not remain hidden. It could often be easily detected by the questions posed by the Orientalists and in the selection of methodology utilized in their studies.

The rise of secular humanism in the enlightenment period (modern era) and beyond gave rise to a reassessment of Islam, sometimes resulting in more positive views, for example; secular-oriented admiration of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) as a robust and effective leader, in contrast to Jesus’ lack of worldly success. However, it also led to a view of religion in general as irrational, a view which often finds favour in the secular-dominated media.

The new ideas regarding formulation of a constitution and implementation of the liberalized Western doctrines of a democracy which functioned through elected representative in parliaments reformed and radically altered the political structures in the Middle East. Orientalism therefore became valuable tool for the subversion of Islam. The main task of such subversive attempt was to pull out the claws of Islam which could impede colonial exploitation of Muslim lands. It gave a Westernized interpretation of Islam and distorted the real meaning of Islamic concepts like *Jihād*, *Ummah*, etc.

Through such studies the Orientalists posed themselves superior and placed the Muslims as inferior. Furthermore, Muslim civilization was considered to be decadent while Western civilization was considered dynamic. In this sense colonization was considered necessary to ‘civilize the people and their institutions. In

fact, as Albert Hourani states, “there was a tendency to view Islamic history in terms of rise and decline: Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) plants a seed, which grows to its full height under the early Abbasids, in terms of both political power and cultural renaissance; after that, political fragmentation and cultural stagnation lead to a long decline from which the Muslim world does not begin to awaken until the nineteenth century, with the impact of Western civilization and the stirrings of national spirit.”

These studies, despite claims to be objective, still project Western centered approaches which distort the reality as it is in the real context and failed to perceive the point of view of the subjects of the study. The result is that such studies have covered the political and economic realities of the subjects with Western ideologies. In fact, “Modern day Orientalists who write about Islam have shed the overt hostility of the nineteenth century missionary scholars who viewed Islam as a heathen religion, unworthy of respect.”

The impact of relentless approach towards the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) as well as Islam in the contemporary world

The persistent attempts of Orientalists towards Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) as well as Islam revealed their (Westerners) interests and nature of studies i.e. whether, biased or unbiased and sympathetic or jealous. The biased ideology of Orientalists has not changed and still functions in the same manner (as its classical era) but under new labels. Their present depiction of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is as a preacher of those beliefs which are not compatible with modernity and as a tyrant and pervert man who murdered masses.

It is not surprising that Orientalism had and will always have the biggest hand in shaping the Western perception of Islam as well as forming the Western attitudes towards Islam. The label of ‘terrorism’ and the new term ‘Islamophobia’ are not sudden reactions but it is a consequence of age old jealousy of Western world for the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) and his followers, which was demonstrated through a number of charges raised by Orientalists since the inception of writings on *sīrah* of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

The association of violence and Islam is a common misconception about Islam that developed among the general public of the West. This extremist nature of Orientalists has reached to such an extent that they started to demonstrate Islam as a religion of terrorism and Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) as a terrorist. This view of the West is totally wrong because history has witnessed that Islam never spread by sword and coercion but by means of its universal themes of tolerance, peace, fraternity, equality etc.

In the post-Cold War era, much Western writings and media attention focused to create a relationship between Islam and terrorism. It launched a concerted campaign against Islam in the name of a campaign against terror. Term “Muslim” and “terrorist” became synonymous in many Western countries. Islam is known as “fundamentalism”, “extremism” and “radicalism”. *Madrasah* is known as the place where one can get fundamentalist education. Muslims are represented by the West as terrorists who are posing a threat to the security of West.

Western writers and its media associated Islam and terrorism by misquoting the concept of *Jihād* in Islam. They depicted Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) as offensive in the wars and considered the spread of Islam by the sword. They distort meaning of *Jihād* by referring to it as a holy war, where Muslims unreasonably kill non-believers, contrary to the *Qur’ānic* concept of *Jihād*. They often take the word *Jihād* out of context to propagate negative views on Islam. Western scholars and its media are trying to prove that Muslim countries are inherited prone to violence, fanaticism, medieval ideas and prejudice and it both as a religion and cultural influence is to bear the responsibility for all such regional ills. The West is the harbinger of sweetness and light, civility, rationality and open-mindedness.

Islamophobia which could be read as a modern conceptualization of opposition to Islam is accepted as a modern and secular discourse following September 11 (2001) incident of World Trade Centre, in places where Muslim immigrants live densely. It actually is a phenomenon that has its roots back to the Middle Ages in Europe. Every incident that was experienced from the Crusaders to Middle Age form the Ottoman Empire to European colonialism and from there to Islamophobic actions of the 1990s, were all reflections of mentioned historic opinions. The transformation of these reflections to a modern epistemology and

support to Islamophobia by academics and politicians, results in the separation of East and West. Thus, perception of Islam as a threat to secularism, democracy and to Western civilizations in relation to that, looking at Islam and Muslims as a phenomenon that belongs to the Middle Ages, have all played a role directly in spreading fear of Islam and hatred for Islam while forming the theoretical ground of mentioned opposition.

The promotion of Islamophobia creates both prejudice and discrimination among the general population. Prejudice plays a key role in the existence and proliferation of Islamophobia. Prejudice alone, as a negative judgment, opinion, or attitude, is a detriment to a population's over wellbeing. Prejudice combined with overt actions, rising to the level of discrimination, creates a dangerous environment for its victims. The Western writings and media has left no room for Muslims to represent themselves and present them in their own way or perception as they have always done sometimes in the name of barbarism of Bedouin Arabs, sometime with reference of Crusades, sometime in the name of logic or rationalism and sometimes terrorism and under the disgusting term 'Islamophobia'.

So, the main contradiction of the Orientalists' study founded on the Western discourse about the East is based on perspective ground rather than a factual reality. These Western depictions presented about the East and Islam find their meaning through this perceptual ground. The representation generated through variety of Western forms, is generally symbols that are derived from imaginary knowledge. The imaginary error in the Western mentality which is historically continuous shows its influence in a quiet broad area including politics, human rights and freedom. 'Islamophobia', which is seen as a major issue of Western socio-political life style recently, makes up the modern form of a similar imaginary error.

On the contrary, Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance even the word Islam is derived from the root-word "*Salm*" or "*Silm*" which means peace and security. Islam does not use compulsion with the people of other religions in the matter of faith. It always expresses an openness, politeness and respect for other religions, faith and cultures. The peaceful existence with non-Islamic beliefs is an essential Islamic principle that is found in the *Qur'ānic* teachings and has been witnessed throughout the whole Muslim history, then how the word terror can be associate with Islam? The

Qur'ānic view of peace and coexistence is based on its view of universal moral discourse that unites all human beings. Its concept of universal moral order is thus grounded in the recognition of an innate disposition engraved in the human conscience.

To overcome this situation or to improve the image of Islam in the whole world it is required that strong and persistence efforts from Muslims themselves, both in the Muslim world and Muslim communities in the Western world should be directed in this issue. These efforts include comprehensive process of reforms. They will have to avoid their internal clashes based on caste, race, sect and will have to follow the teachings of *Qur'ān* and Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). They will never be able to depict their real image if they fail to appear as a single nation or culture or civilization.

Orientalism and the present anti-Islamic notions (like Islamophobia) are highly inter-related. Therefore, it is suggested that regarding the Orientalists' misconceptions about Islam and the Prophet of Islam, research should be carried in the future to highlight the reality and provide the facts in their proper context nullifying the false accusations on logical and objective basis. Further, in the contemporary era, the real image of Islam highlighting its universal themes of peace, tolerance, equality and fraternity, needs to be brought forth to eradicate the false notions of 'Islamophobia, Radical Islam, Fundamental Islam' etc.