INTRODUCTION

Past helps understand the present and the future in a better way. It is in this perspective that one is prompted to touch on the reflections of the writers and travellers who wrote about the Arabs in bygone ages. That, in order to have a fuller and proper understanding of the Arabs' image as depicted in the travel literature of the first half of the twentieth century it would be useful to get acquaintance with the literature that in the past contributed considerably to the making of the image of the Arabs in the English speaking world in one or another way. Naturally such an attempt would also provide a historical background to fully grasp the subject that will be thoroughly discussed in this thesis.

Perhaps one of the most ancient writers who made a crystal clear reference to Arabia was the Greek historian Herodotus (484 B.C.-430-420). In his book Herodotus who wrote in the fifth century B.C., described Arabia as a strange land which was filled with perils and fantasies, and produced 'frankincense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon, and ladanum.' Herodotus has further described that how these items were procured by the Arabs. According to him it was not easy to obtain any of the above mentioned items except

the myrrh. The Frankincense, according to Herodotus, was procured by burning the gum styrax. 'For the trees', writes Herodotus, 'which bear the frankincense are guarded by winged serpents, small in size, and of varied colour, whereof vast numbers hang about every tree... and there is nothing but the smoke of the Styrax which will drive them from the trees.'

Cassia was another product of Arabia that, according to Herodotus grew in shallow lakes and was collected with some difficulty. For cassia or the lakes where it grew, was surrounded by 'winged animals, much resembling bats, which screech horribly, and are very valiant.' Hence in order to obtain cassia one had to cover all his body and his face except the eyes, with the hides of oxen and other skins.

The Arabs used to employ a creative method in order to procure cinnamon. According to Herodotus the Arabs had no idea as to which country produced cinnamon. However, it used to be brought to Arabia by some big birds for making their nests on some inaccessible cliffs. To obtain cinnamon the Arabs used to cut dead animals, like oxen, asses and beasts, into pieces, to scatter them around the place where

1. Ibid. P. 498.
2. Ibid. P. 500.
the birds had built their nests and, then, to withdraw from the scene. The big birds would naturally swoop down to take the pieces of meat to their nests which being unable to bear the weight would break off and fall to the ground. The Arabs would then emerge from their hideouts and collect the fallen cinnamon which used to be exported to many countries including Greece.

Ladanum was another thing which the Arabs used to procure in an equally strange fashion. According to Herodotus, ladanum was the 'Sweetest-scented of all substances' which the Arabs used to burn as incense. Strangely enough it was 'gathered from the beards of the goats, where it is found sticking like gum, having come from the bushes on which they browse'.

But Herodotus was, however, most impressed by the spices of Arabia. 'The whole country,' he wrote, 'is scented with them, and exhales an odour marvellously Sweet.'

Strabo (64/63 B.C. - 23 A.D.) was another Greek historian who wrote in first century B.C. He, like Herodotus, has written about Arabia at some length. In his book Geography he described Arabia as a blessed land, which was fertile, rich with spices and filled with strange creatures. But the Arabs, according to Strabo, were not farmers by

2. Ibid. p. 502.
occupation, rather they used to raise herds of all kinds particularly camels.

Strabo has handed down a detailed account of Gerrah (a coastal town on the Gulf) and its inhabitants. The soil of Gerrah, according to him, contained salt and the people lived in houses made of salt which were frequently watered by their occupants in order to prevent them from melting away due to the scorching heat of the sun.

Strabo's Arabia besides being rich with spices was replete with a variety of herbs whose fragrant smell was sweet and pleasant. Strabo has also made a mention of some 'sweet smelling palms and reeds'. Moreover, like Herodotus, he has depicted Arabia as a land filled with venomous serpents 'which are dark-red in colour, can leap even as far as a hare, and inflict an incurable bite'.

Besides the description of the Arab land and its physical features Strabo has also left an account of his impressions about the Arabs whom he sometimes referred to as Sabaeans. He believed that 'on account of fruits people are lazy and easy going in their modes of life.' Moreover they, according to Strabo, were extremely sensual

2. Ibid.
people who spent their lives in effeminate luxury. They also used to become drowsy by sweet odours which they overcame by 'inhaling the incense of asphaltus and goats' beard'.(1) Nevertheless the Arabs of Strabo's time were prosperous traders. As portrayed by him, 'from their trafficking both the Sabaeans (Arabs) and the Gerreheans have become richest of all, and they have a vast equipment of both gold and silver articles, such as couches and tripods and bowls, together with drinking vessels and very costly houses, for doors and walls and ceilings are variegated with ivory and gold and silver set with precious stones.'(2)

Another ancient source which contributed greatly to the Arabs' image is the Christians' holy book, the Bible. There are numerous references, both direct and indirect, to the Arabs in the Bible. For instance in Genesis, 37:25 Arabs are referred to as Ishmaelite traders who used to go to Egypt for commercial purposes. The word 'Arab' however, first appeared in Isaiah 13:20: 'There no Arab shall pitch his tent',(3) Obviously prophet Isaiah depicted the Arabs as a Bedouin, without any good or bad attributes. But

1. Ibid. p. 347.
2. Ibid.
3. All biblical quotations in this thesis, unless otherwise indicated are from The New English Bible jointly translated and published by the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses.
in other places in the Bible the Arabs have been referred to as raiders and lurking mercenaries. Such a remark first appeared in Jeremiah 3:2 You sat by the wayside to catch lovers, like an Arab lurking in the desert.' In Maccabees 5:39 the Arabs are again described as a mercenary. It can be reasonably concluded that the Bible, being the cornerstone of Christian faith, must have created a bad image of the Arabs in the minds of the people who became its believers.

There is no sufficient written record to show if there was any contact between the people of Western Europe and the Arabs in early Christian centuries. However, there is a reason to believe that the common European opinion about the Arabs might have been greatly prejudiced. Fisher, in his A History of Europe writes that the European view of Arabia as prevalent in A.D. 500 was that it was a remote and inhospitable country. 'Nothing is likely to be reported', he wrote, 'from this scorching wilderness....Arabian Society was still in the tribal stage and the hawk-eyed Bedouen tribes might be confidently expected to rob and massacre each other till the crack of doom.' Fisher further opined that 'the Arabs were poets, dreamers, fighters, traders; they were not politicians.'

Such images were to last long, even after the emergence of Islam in early seventh century. The advent of Islam intact opened a new phase of relationship between the Latinate Christian West and the Arabs. As commonly known the Prophet Muhammad(s) was an Arab and the early converts to his faith were also of the same race. Moreover, it is also a historical fact that within a century of its advent Islam carved for itself a big empire which was greater than that of Rome at its zenith, an empire extending from the Bay of Biscay to the Indies and the confines of China and from the Aral Sea to the upper cataracts of the Nile. The name of the Prophet-son of Arabia, joined with the name of Almighty Allah, was being called five times a day from thousand of minarets scattered over South Western Europe, Northern Africa and Western and Central Asia.\(^{(1)}\) Many countries conquered by Muslims and thus included in the flourishing Islamic empire were earlier Christian. Moreover, not only Christian territories were brought under Islamic control, but also a vast number of Christians began to embrace the Islamic faith. This was a disturbing moment of history for Christian leadership. Church leaders, especially those living in the Muslim lands, began, mainly out of anger and frustration, to criticise the faith of Islam. Later on their unfounded criticism was passed on the Christian West which were readily accepted as golden pillars of truth.

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Initial reaction against Islam and the Prophet came from a number of Christian scholars and church leaders. However, the most prominent among them was St. John of Damascus who popularized a number of fabricated stories about Islam and its messenger. The core of his criticism was that Muhammad(s) was a pseudo prophet, inspired and guided by a Christian heretic or the Arian(1) Monk, Bahira who taught him the Old and New Testaments from which he picked up ideas and stories that he used as a source for manufacturing a so-called divine book, the Holy Quran in order to fulfill his personal ambitions. 'St John,' writes Norman Daniel, 'also introduced other elements that would long survive, he descended to ridicule, for example, of what he mistakenly took to be Quranic belief, the Camel of God, in a petty way, and he began the long tradition of

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1. Arius was a presbyter in the Church of Alexandria. Extremely learned and intelligent he held views which were different from commonly held Christian beliefs. His ideas can be summed up as 'an absolute monotheism, according to which the son can not be an emanation of the Father, or a part of his substance or another being similar to the Father, for any of these three possibilities would deny either the immaterial nature of God or His unity'. Arianism as expounded by Gonzalez implies that 'although all things were made by him, he himself was made by the Father, and is therefore a creature, and not God in the strict sense of the word.' (Gonzalez, J.L. A History of Christian Thought vol I. pp. 270-71). Arius' theology is known as Arianism and his followers as Arians. Arianism was condemned as heresy by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325.
attacking Muhammad for bringing in God simulating revelation in order to justify his own sexual indulgence'.

It was under the influence of such unsavoury writings of St. John that the medieval Europe came to view Muhammad(s) as a cunning pseudo prophet and the Arabs as pagans and idolators who were gullible enough to be deceived by Muhammad's (s) 'false claims', Moreover the medieval European accounts depicted Mecca, the Holy City of Islam as a 'city of prostitutes', and the Muslims as extremely sensuous and lecherous. But most dangerously the Church leaders widely spread an exaggerated and unfounded story that the 'heathen Arabs' were profaning and polluting churches in Jerusalem and elsewhere and that Islam was a potential menace to the Christian West. Such a propaganda naturally poisoned the minds of European Christians and ultimately led to the emergence of the Crusading Movement which aimed at fighting the Arab 'infidels' and freeing Jerusalem from their occupation.

Whatever the political consequences of the so-called holy crusades they opened the door for cultural interpenetration and direct contact between the Arabs and the Europeans. The crusaders were told by their Church leaders that the Arabs were an inferior race who worshipped Muhammad as God and took pride in persecuting Christians everywhere in the Muslim world. For instance Pope Urban II who

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launched and preached the first crusade 'apparently stressed the plight of Eastern Christians, the molestation of pilgrims and the desecration of the holy places.' (1) Other baseless stories widely circulated throughout Europe were that the Crucifix was insulted by forcing Christian children to spit upon it, that the Golden Cross was thrown down from the Dome of the Rock and that the defenceless Christians were being regularly massacred by Muslims on wide scales.

But when the Crusaders met their Arab enemies in the battle fields they found that they (Arabs) were not barbarous as they had been led to believe. Rather they possessed chivalry, mercy and nobility of spirit, qualities which they admired very much. Sultan Salah al Din (1137/38-1193) known as Saladin in English literature especially impressed the Crusaders. It was through verbal stories of the Crusaders that Saladin became extremely popular in Europe mainly for his chivalrous dealings with his defeated enemies.

The Crusades, inspite of being wars or conquest and associated with ignominious plunder and destruction, were important in the sense that they provided an opportunity for direct relationship between European Christians and Arab Muslims. Once the war was over many crusaders, instead of returning back to their homeland, decided to settle

in the holy land. This inevitably gave them an opportunity to remove or correct many of their unrounded prejudices about the Arabs, their religion and culture. Moreover, with the passage of time, they came to realize the cultural superiority of the Arabs and were so much impressed by it that they began to discard their European dress 'in favour of the more comfortable and more suitable native clothing.' They also 'acquired new tastes in food, especially those varieties involving the generous use of sugar and spices,' and began to like 'oriental houses, with their spacious open courts and running water.'

But the Crusaders who went back to their countries, instead of carrying rich experiences and new ideas, took with them stories, probably taken from the Arabian Nights, which they circulated through the length and breadth of Europe and thus provided fresh material to reinforce old Christian prejudices and polemic about the Islamic faith and culture.

Along with the stories and legends that the Crusaders took to Europe, particularly England, there were produced some serious scholarly works which unfortunately could not become popular as source books. There were three great scholars in the twelfth century who knew the Arabic language and were highly impressed by Arab method of learning.

1. Hitti, *The Arabs* op. cit. p. 188.
They were, Robert of Chester, Daniel of Morley who, dissatisfied with the Frankish universities, went to the Arabs to learn philosophy, and Adelard of Bath who was most learned of the three and was regarded as the pioneer of Arab learning in the West. Adelard visited many Arab universities in Syria and Spain in early twelfth century in order to learn Arab sciences. Because of his wide knowledge and experience he was appointed royal tutor to king Henry II. But his worth remembering contribution was his translation of many Arabic works into Latin as well as his own works, The Natural Questions in which he tried to prove the superiority of the Arab method of learning.

But Adelard's views could not get wide currency. The common people were more interested in spicy and juicy accounts of travellers like Mandeville who visited the Arab world in the later part of the twelfth century. In his book, The Travels Mandeville portrayed the Arabs as evil, wicked and malicious. According to him most Arabs were bedouin, though some of them had settled in small towns and villages. The only admirable quality Mandeville could see in the Arabs was their strong sense of freedom and resentment of outside authority which not unoften led them to take arms against the Sultan.

The Venetian Voyager Marco Polo's travelogue, which was published at the end of the thirteenth century and
became widely popular in Europe, also contributed its bit to malign the image of Islam. In his accounts Polo narrated a strange story entitled 'Old Man of the Mountain' which appears to have been a figment of his own imagination. According to Polo there was an old 'Saracen' prince, namely Alo-eddin and Muslim by faith, who lived in a paradise like valley in which he had built beautiful gardens and palaces with streams of honey, milk and wine flowing around and youthful girls entertaining the dwellers with song and dance. Polo further says that the old prince was not only lecherous but also a dangerous man. For he had hired young assassins to kill anyone he wished. His method of functioning was unique and was deliberately given a religious colour by Polo, that the Old Man would first give opium to his young assassins and throw them out of the paradise after they fell asleep. Then he would order them to assassinate anyone he liked, promising them a place in the paradise. 'We have the assurances of our prophet that he who defends his lord shall inherit paradise, and if you show yourselves devoted to the obedience of my orders, that happy lot awaits you.' (1) It is not hard to imagine that what a bad image of Muslims and Islam such baseless stories of widely read fanciful travelogues would have created in European minds.

As noted earlier direct contact between England and the Arab world was established in the twelfth century when some scholars of English origin visited Arab universities for the sake of knowledge. In the subsequent thirteenth to seventeenth centuries information about the Arabs, mostly baseless and fictitious, continued to reach England through various sources such as the accounts of merchants, travellers and the works of Arabic knowing scholars.

The English merchants began their trade with the Arabs in early fifteenth century. Cog Anne, commanded by Robert Sturmy of Bristol was one of the earliest vessels to reach the port of Jaffa. In 1457 Sturmy sailed another vessel, namely, The Katherine Sturmy, and reported on various ports of the Levant. In 1511 the famous Hakluyt recorded that numerous big and tall ships were engaged in trade with the Arabs of the Levant countries.  

In the sixteenth century the Arab countries were conquered by the Ottomans who in 1553 granted permission to the English merchants to trade in all Turkish dominions, including the Arab territories such as Tunis, Algeria, Tripoli (all three known in England as pirate states), Syria, Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula.

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Trade between two nations or peoples involves not only exchange of commodities but also provides opportunities for intercultural understanding. And if the travelling merchants are honestly eager to know about the host community with a view to disseminating knowledge among their countrymen they can richly contribute to the common fund of human knowledge and promote international understanding. But unfortunately the merchants of the sixteenth-century England who had little knowledge of Arabic language proved bad servants of knowledge. In the words of Samuel Purchas they brought home from their foreign journeys nothing but 'a few smattering terms, flattering garts, Apish cringes, uppish rancies, foolish guises and disguises, the vanities of Neichbour Nations...without furthering of their knowledge of God, the world or themselves'(1)

The seventeenth century saw more English merchants travelling to the Arab world whose accounts were eagerly read in England. However, in the same century some serious studies were also made to unravel the wealth of Arabic thought and the Arabs' intellectual richness.

William Bedwell (1561-1632) who became known as father of Arabic studies in England of his time was a

1. Purchas, Samuel, Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrims, Glasgow, 1905.(Vol.1) P.XLIIV.
great admirer of the Arabic language. He held that Arabic was the 'only language of religion and the chief language of diplomacy and business from the Fortunate Isles and the China Seas.'

Bedwell is credited with having written a Lexicon, namely, The Arabian Interpreter in which he incorporated and explained mainly those Arabic words which could be used by English merchants and travellers in their day to day dealings with the Arabs.

Despite being highly impressed by the Arabic language Bedwell was not favourably disposed to Islam, the religion of the Arabs. His missionary connection compelled him to refer to the Prophet Muhammad(s) as 'impostor' and 'inventor' of the Holy Quran.

Edmund Castell (1606-1685) was another Arabist of the era. He became the first Cambridge Professor of Arabic Studies. He produced a useful dictionary of Semitic languages which was greatly admired in his time. He is also credited with having translated some Arabic poems in English which he dedicated to King Charles II.

Edward Pococke (1604-1691) was probably the most prominent Arabist of his time. Widely read and missionary


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minded, he was well-versed in Arabic language, history and culture. He spent five years in Aleppo where he made lifelong friendship with a certain Sheikh Fathallah in order to learn Arabic and the Arabs' contribution to knowledge. Pococke wrote numerous books. His pioneering work, however, was *The Specimen of the History of the Arabs* which was printed in Oxford in 1649. The book dealt with various aspects of Arab culture and history.

There were many other Arabists in the seventeenth century. However, their contribution to the making of the image of the Arabs in England was negligible. In fact, it were still travellers' accounts which were popular with the common readers and thus remained the main source of information about the Arab people. Among numerous travellers of the period William Lithgow, George Sandy and Henry Blount were most prominent. Naturally their travelogues played a vital role in popularising a bad and maligned image of the Arabs.

Lithgow travelled in the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire in early years of the seventeenth century. In his travelogue, *Peregrination* he portrayed the Arabs

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1. The full title of the book, which was published in 1614, is as follows: *A Most Delectable and True Discourse of a Painful Peregrination.*
as wild, savage, blood thirsty, robber, cruel and unmanagi-
able who not unoften annoyed even their Ottoman masters. The reason behind Lithgow's hatred of the Arabs was that they were Muslim by faith. By the same token he also condemned the Turks as untrustworthy. His distrust of the Muslim Turks and Arabs led him to hire a Christian guide on his journey to Lidda who, however, proved to be in connivance with some three hundred Arab robbers and informed them in advance about the routes Lithgow's caravan was to follow and the valuable riches they possessed. In his travelogue Lithgow also depicted the Arabs, the Turks, and the Moors, all Muslim, as avowed enemy of Christ. When comparatively viewed the Turks in his eye were dangerous but somewhat tolerable. But the Arabs and the Moors were either thieves or robbers, even barbarous and inhuman, hence completely intolerable.

George Sandy journeyed among the Arabs of Egypt and Palestine in 1610. He recollected his experiences in his *Relation of a Journey*, he expressed both favourable and unfavourable views about the Arabs. On the one hand he described them as robbers and on the other as noblemen who keep their promise and accomplish their duties faithfully when they make any contract with foreign travellers. Sandy found Arabia both fertile and barren. But most Arabs,
according to him were nomads who used to dwell in movable tent houses. Sandy further describes the 'sons of the desert' as fiercely independent and proud people. They were fully conscious of their nobility or of having been emanated from pure stocks. The main profession of the desert Arabs, according to Sandy, was to raise camels and horses, the mainstay of their economy. The camel, Sandy opined, was vitally important for the Arabs, especially for carrying loads when their masters wandered in the desert in search of pastures and springs of water. Sandy had not the point when he alluded the Arabian camel to a ship and the desert as a sea.

Henry Blount, a contemporary of Sandy and Liturgow, was another important traveller of the seventeenth century. In his Voyage into the Levant he made a comparative study of the Arabs and the Turks. He was all praise for the Turks, impressed especially by their good manners and by their big empire. But he portrayed the Arabs as unruly, malicious, treacherous and effeminate who can be ruled over only with an iron hand. Blount also recorded the methods of torture such as 'impaling, gauncing, flaying alive, cutting off the waist, hanging by the root, planting in burning lime and the like'.(1) which the Turks used to

employ in order to keep the Arabs under their control. Blount was not disturbed by these terrible tactics of torture but approved of them and was happy to witness two such torturing sessions.

In the later part of the seventeenth century the Arabs began to be depicted in the accounts of the English travellers and merchants, even in the works of poet who had never left England to visit a foreign country, as cruel pirates and slave-traders. Joseph Pitts who claimed to have been captured by Algerian pirates in 1678 was among the first writers who popularized this theme. In his so-called Faithful Account he recollected that how he was captured, sold twice and ultimately forced by his Algerian master to embrace Islam. The same master took Pitts to Arabia in order to perform the holy Pilgrimage. In his later life Pitts managed to escape.

Pitts described at length his experiences of Arabia, Egypt, and of other countries in his book, the Faithful Account. His portrayal of the Arabs, the Egyptians and the Algerians, as expected, was not favourable. He was especially bitter towards the Algerians and condemned them as pirates, slave traders, beggars, homo-sexuals and robbers.

Some of Pitts' accounts, however, were full of

1. The full title of the book is as follows: A Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mahometans, With an Account of the Author's Having Been Taken by His Master on the Pilgrimage to Mecca. The book was first published in 1704.
knowledge. For instance his description of the inhabitants of the Arabian desert who were utterly poor, thinly structured, lean and swarthy. Besides, Pitts also met some travelling Dervishes whose entire possession was a sheep or a goat skin on which they lay when the time came for sleep or rest. He further claimed to have attended some discourses of the religious scholars who, sitting in high chairs, used to expound out the Holy Quran. He, like Italian traveller, Vartnema dismissed the legend prevalent in Europe that Muhammad's tomb was suspended in the air. But, as a whole, his attitude towards Islam was hostile. He depicted the Arabs as natural mischief mongers and Islam as a false religion invented by a 'vile and debauched impostor'. He even accused Muslims of Mecca to be idolaters.

Pitts' so-called Faithful Account became very popular in England in the first half of the eighteenth century. Meanwhile in 1712 the famous tales of the Arabian Nights were rendered into English from a French translation. The tales of The Nights not only reinforced previous images of the Arabs as presented in the accounts of the travellers but also introduced new themes. For instance Arabs began to be portrayed as inhabitants of a mysterious and magical world which was full of genies, flying horses, supernatural birds and replete with exotic scenes of harems, princesses,
slaves, eunuchs, along with the unbelievable stories of
dancing dervishes, Sindbad the Sailor and Ali Baba's four
Arabian Nights was read by commissions of Englishmen not as a book
of entertainment, but as a vital account of the Arab
history. The Nights not only made a lasting impression on
English literature but also played a vital role in shaping
the mental attitudes of Englishmen towards the
Arabs. They had become so much infatuated with the tales of
the Nights that when Simon Ockley (1676-1726), Professor
of Arabic in Cambridge, wrote a serious work, The History
of the Saracens (first published in 1708) which presented the
cultural and political history of the Arabs as a melange
different from that in the Arabian Nights it was received
by his contemporaries with new interest and disbelief. In
his book Ockley portrayed the Arabs somewhat romantically,
and with a book in which one accepted, with
in the field of knowledge as on the battlefields, were
spectacular by any standard. But such accounts of the Arab
history seem to have surprised many, shocked even the
serious minded Englishmen. Describing the general disbelief
ment and disbelief Ockley wrote in his introduction to
the second edition of his book that 'a reverence dignit
said me, if, when I wrote that book I had not lately been
reading the history of Oliver Cromwell.'(1) The implication was obvious. That the Arabs were incapable of any worthwhile and significant achievements, literary, cultural, political or otherwise. It was against this background that Ockley was compelled to complain that the English people entertain 'too mean an opinion of them (the Arabs), looking upon them as mere barbarians which mistaken notion of theirs, has hindered all further enquiry.'(2)

But inspite of being impressed by the Arabs as a race Ockley could not free himself from the prevalent prejudices of his age against Islam and Muhammad(s). He dismissed Islam as a religion or superstition and Muhammad(s) as impostor. However, he gave full credit to Islam for eradicating idolatry from and uniting the warlike and jarring tribes of Arabia who later on became the 'first ruin of the eastern church.'(3)

Although unfavourably disposed to the prophet Muhammad Ockley was highly impressed by one of his successors, Al Mamun:

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2. Ockley, Simon, History of the Saracens, Loncon, 1874. p. XI.
3. Ibic. p. X.
At last, in Almamoun's reign, who was the twenty seventh after Mahomet, and was inaugurated Caliph in 108 year of the Hegirah (A.D.813), learning began to be cultivated to a very great degree, mathematicks especially, and astronomy: And in order to promote it, that noble Caliph spared no cost, either to procure such Greek books as were serviceable to that purpose, or to encourage learned men to the study of them.\(^{(1)}\)

It was at Almamun's behest, Ockley further states, that the works of Greek philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers, botanists and physicians were translated in Arabic. Later the Arabs took their intellectual riches to Arabia and Spain where many great universities were established in the subsequent centuries. According to Ockley the Arabs' achievements in the field of knowledge were 'no less wonderful than that of their conquests.'\(^{(2)}\)

Ockley had, however, one complaint, though not wholly true, against the Arabs. That they were little interested in history and historiography:

Had they... applied themselves to the historians, as they did to the philosophers, and studied Herodotus, Inucydes, Xenophon,

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1. Ibid. p. XI.
2. Ibid.
and such other masters of correct writing as that language could have afforded them, we might have expected from them a succession of historians worthy to write those great actions which have been performed among them. (1)

George Sale (1694-1736) was another important Arabist of the eighteenth century. His greatest contribution was his translation of the Holy Quran in English which was first published in 1734. Unfortunately it did not prove as much an important event as did the publication of the Arabian Nights and, due to little interest shown by the then Englishmen to scholarly things and partly owing to their bigotry, it made little impression on English literature and sensibilities. As a result majority of Englishmen continued to hold wrong opinions about the Arabs.

Sale's translation was preaced by a learned introduction, Preliminary Discourse to the Koran, in which he elaborated the religion, learning and customs of the Arabs.

Sale very intelligently explained that why foreign civilizations, especially Islam need to be objectively studied. 'If the religious and civil institution of foreign

1. Ibid. P. XII,
nations are worth our knowledge, he wrote, 'those of Muham-
mad, the law giver of the Arabsians, and founder of an
e-pire which in less than a century spread itself over
a greater part of the world than the Romans were ever
masters of, must need be so.'

Sale was first to point out that why the Arabs
came to be known as Saracen? in his opinion the word,
Saracen was in fact derived from the Arabic word Shārīj
meaning the East, where the Arabs had been ruling elite for
many centuries. Sale also directed many a illiterate
people about Arabia by ancient travellers and writ is.
He rightly pointed out that contrary to the notion belief
Arabia was not a rich country in olden times. Indeed many
riches associated with or supposed to be the produce of
Arabia were brought from India and the coasts of Africa
which the Arabs traders popularised in Egypt and Syria.
Sale further stated that although Arabian society was
primarily tribal, and most tribes always fought with each
other, the Arabs as a whole never allowed foreigners to
intrude and rule over them. Nothing has been more dear
to them than 'liberty of which new nations can produce
so ancient monuments, with very little interruption, from

the very Deluge'. Often great armies were sent against them but such efforts either themselves proved abortive or were frustrated by joint Arab action. The Turks, in Sale's opinion, succeeded to subdue the Arabs only when the Arabs had become weak and terribly divided because of their unending tribal warfare.

Along with virtues and merits of the Arabs, Sale also enumerated their vices and shortcomings. First, the constant inter-tribal fighting which the travellers and scholars have been writing down in their works since ancient days, has cultivated a notion among the people that the Arabs have a natural disposition for war and bloodshed. Next and no less important is the fact that frequent robberies committed by these people on merchants and travellers have rendered the name of an Arab almost infamous in Europe.

Sale's writing might have influenced and prompted Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) to declare that the Prophet Muhammad was not an impostor. Carlyle, though critical of some aspects of Islam, is well known for his somewhat good opinion about the Prophet. For instance he dismissed the nation of Muhammad being an hypocrite and boldly pronounced that the 'man's (Prophet Muhammad) words were not

1. Ibid. P. 10.
2. Ibid. P. 22.
false... no Inanity and Similacrum, a fiery mass of life cost-up from the great bosom of Nature itself.(1)

Sir William Jones was another important orientalist of the eighteenth century. He learnt Arabic from an Arab whom he had brought to London from Aleppo on his own expense. He was first to translate Almoallaqat, the seven odes written by the poets of the pre-Islamic period, and said to have been inscribed in gold and hung at the door of Ka'bah in recognition of their literary excellence. He seems to have been greatly influenced by the beauty and precision of the language of the seven odes and as a result praised the Arab speech to be voluble and articulate. Moreover, he portrayed the Arabs as manly, dignified and freeoom loving whose minds were always alert, attentive and quick to apprehend.(2)

Edward Gibbon, the famous eighteenth-century historian was not an Arabist. However, he learnt about the Arabs from Latin, French and English sources. He was greatly influenced by the Arabs' love for freedom and for this season alone eulogized them in the following manner:

The slaves of domestic tyranny may vainly exult in their national independence, but the Arab is personally free, and he enjoys, in some degree,

the benefit of society, without, forfeiting the prerogatives of nature. Their spirit, their steps are unconfinned, the desert is open, and the tribes and families are held together by mutual and voluntary compact... In the more simple state of the Arabs the nation is free, because, each of her sons disdains a base submission to the will of a master.... The gravity and firmness of the mind is conspicuous in his outward demeanour, his speech is slow, weighty, and concise. (1)

In the same period, that is, the eighteenth century, travellers also continued to visit the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In comparison with the travellers of the previous centuries the eighteenth-century travellers seem to have adopted a more serious approach to Arabia and the Arabs. Mainly there were three such travellers, Richard Pococke, a wealthy clergyman, Alexander Russell, a doctor, and James Bruce, an explorer who claimed to have successfully discovered the source of the river Nile.

Pococke spent three years, 1737-1740, in the Arab world studying Arab society and people. In his Description of the East published in 1743, besides repeating some old stereotypes such as thefts and robberies, he introduced some new themes like the Arabs' need for money. On several occasions, he claimed, his life was threatened because he refused to pay money or anything else demanded by the Arabs.

of raiding Arabs as ransom. However, every time he succeeded to save his life and, profitably for him, he learnt by such experiences how to handle the greedy Arab folks. In the first place he cautioned the travellers that they should not give in to threats and refuse to pay any ransom under any circumstance. Next, they should try to dissuade the Arabs from getting hostile by offering or coffee, a sign of hospitality and courtesy which was and is still widely respected in the Arab world.

Pococke, however, did not condemn all the Arabs as evil or greedy. There were no doubt thieves, robbers and xenophobes but a good many Arabs were brave, honest, trustworthy and hospitable whom he appreciated very much.

Pococke, unlike many of his predecessors, was not inimical towards the bedouins whom he described as ones who lived in tent houses earning their livelihood from the cattle they grazed. He, however, had no word of praise for the Egyptians whom he condemned as lethargic, idle and good for nothing. 'They delight,' he wrote, 'in sitting still hearing tales and indeed seem always to have been more fit for the quiet life'.(1)

Alexander Russell was first English traveller who, instead of writing about a people or a place superficially,

made an exhaustive survey of the society and people of the Syrian city called Aleppo. In his work, *Natural History of Aleppo* published in 1757 he did not describe the inhabitants of the city and of the surrounding areas as one entity but made clear cut distinctions between various groups, the Turks, the Affendees and the Aghas. He divided the people of Aleppo, not merely on racial ground but also in socio-economic terms:

The Bashaw with his retinue, and all other immediately in the service of the Porte are called Osmanli, and either speak or affect to speak the Turkish language. The Effendees compose the body of the Ullama, or learned men. Their common language is the Arabic, for most of them being natives of Aleppo, but few can speak the Turkish with tolerable purity. The Agas or (in a restricted sense) those who rent the lands, have still some influence in the Diwan, or Council of the city, but their power and Splendour have been long on the decline, and most of the old families are now extinct. (1)

The Arabs, according to Russell, were the poorest class in the city. The Arab community consisted mainly of manual labourers and their women folk, in order to earn their livelihood, worked as house servants in the Harem.

of affluent Turks and Aghas. However, in spite of their poverty, they maintained their identity intact. Moreover they married but among themselves and thus preserved the purity of their race. Russell further described the living style and dresses of the Arab menfolk and the jewels and the cosmetics of which their women were fond of, such as the powder used for giving the lips a dark bluish colour and the ring of gold and silver put on noses.

The Arabs, according to Russell, lived in two separate and distinct groups: the Bedouins, who claimed to be the true Arabs, lived in movable tent-houses and still wandered in the desert; the city dwellers who were despicably called the Moor by the Bedouins for having degenerated from good Arab virtues by settling in towns and adopting mean professions like trade and agriculture. Russell also referred to the Arabian Nights, then widely popular in England but scarcely available in Aleppo where Russell could trace out only two copies with great difficulty.

James Bruce, another traveller of the period, journeyed in several countries, Ethiopia, Lebanon and Egypt. He recounted his experiences in his work Travels which was first published in 1790. The purpose of his adventurous journey was to discover the source of Nile which, according to him, flowed from Lake Tana in Ethiopia to the sea.
In his travels Bruce has narrated a particular incident that shows both good and bad aspects of Arab character. According to his own accounts once his ship was broken, leaving him almost drowned. But somehow he managed to reach the shore where some Arab robbers were waiting for him. They beat him mercilessly and left the scene thinking he was dead. He lay there almost unconscious when another group of Arabs arrived there. When told in Arabic by Bruce that he was a Christian Dervish, out in search of truth about God, they showed compassion and took him to their tents. Later in 1968 Bruce safely reached Cairo.

In Cairo Bruce found people utterly poor but of good manners. The Cairoites were passive and extremely tolerant to their rulers whom Bruce described as tyrant and oppressive set of miscreants. In Egyptian villages life was even wortest. The people were of poor health and in a state of extreme poverty. The women were especially struck by poverty and looked sixty years old at the age of sixteen.

Bruce had little respect for Islam and the Holy Quran and was disgusted with certain studies of his age which tended to appreciate the faith of the Muslims. ‘In my time,’ he wrote, ‘I have seen in Britain a spirit of enthusiasm for this book (the Quran), in preference to all others, not inferior to that which possessed Mohammed’s followers. Modern unbelievers (Salle and his disciples) have gone every length, but to say directly that it is dictated
by the Spirit of God'.

Carsten Niebuhr, a Dane, was another traveller of the period. He was the member of a tragic expedition which was aimed at exploring and studying scientifically the interior of Arabia. The other members of the expedition were professor Friedrich Von Haven, a Danish philologist and the leader of the team, Peter Rossmal, a Swedish botanist, Christian Carl Kramer, a Danish doctor and the expedition's medical officer, George Wilhelm Baurnfeldio, a German artist and engraver. Niebuhr himself was included in the team as a land surveyor and map maker.

The purpose of the expedition as mentioned above was to explore Arabian inland as well as to collect Oriental manuscripts on Arabian history and Geography, and the copies of the Holy Bible written in Hebrew and Arabic in ancient times. Besides this, all members of the expedition were individually assigned separate tasks in accordance with their particular fields of interest.

The expedition set out from Denmark in 1761 and reached Jiddah in 1762. Niebuhr, contrary to his expectations, found the Arabs friendly who allowed him to survey the land as well as to investigate the imports and exports of the town. From Jiddah Niebuhr and his companions went to

1. Bruce, James, Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773. London, 1813, (Vol.II) P. 436.
Yemen where they were struck hard by malaria. All, excepting Niebuhr and Kramer, died one by one either in Yemen itself or on their way to Bombay. In Bombay Kramer also died leaving Niebuhr alone to fulfill the purpose of the expedition. In December 1764 Niebuhr decided to sail to Muscat where he changed his name to Abdullah pretending to be a Muslim. He, then, travelled in Iraq, Syria and Asia Minor and ultimately returned back to his homeland in 1767.

Niebuhr recollected his experiences in his book, *Travels in Arabia*. The image of the Arabs he portrayed in the book was comparatively favourable. The Arabs, according to him, were an ancient people who held their age old customs very dear to them. The Arabs' love for freedom and their good simple manners especially appealed to Niebuhr.

If any people in the world accord in their history an influence of high antiquity, and of great simplicity of manner, the Arabs surely do.... Having never been conquered, Arabia has scarcely known any changes, but those produced by the hand of nature.(1)

Explaining further the Arabs' 'Spirit of freedom' which rendered them 'incapable of servitude' Niebuhr wrote that the widespread poverty in Arabia was due to their love for independence and voluntary preference of 'liberty to wealth'.

Niebuhr tried to dispel many a misconception widely spread in Europe regarding Muslims' treatment of women as slaves or inferior species. He informed his European readers that the Arab women were highly influential in the family and enjoyed a good deal of liberty in the society. Moreover, they had right to property. Polygamy was, no doubt, in existence but not to the extent it was believed to be in Europe. Niebuhr was greatly to the point when he wrote:

Polygamy is permitted, indeed, among Mahometans and the delicacy of our ladies is shocked at this idea, but the Arabians rarely avail themselves of the privilege of marrying four lawful wives, and entertaining at the same time any number of female slaves. None but voluptuaries marry so many wives, and their conduct is blamed by all sober men. Men of sense, indeed, think of this privilege rather troublesome than convenient. A husband is, by law, obliged to treat his wives suitably to their condition and to dispense his sources among them with perfect equality.\(^1\)

By the end of the eighteenth century the Arab world, especially Egypt assumed increased political importance for Britain. In fact, until the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 the British were least interested in the region. But

\(^1\) Ibi., p. 149.
the occupation of Egypt made them realize that their trade route to India was under threat. Besides this,

the British also realized the weakness of the deteriorating Ottoman Empire which was increasingly becoming unable to maintain the status quo. Canning, a British diplomat in Constantinople, was to the point when he remarked that the Turkish capital was 'not a fit place for a gentleman to live in'. He further opined that 'destruction will not come upon the Empire either from the North or from the South, it is rotten at the heart, the seat of corruption is in the government itself.'(1)

Britain's political interest and involvement in the Arab world, particularly Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century is best reflected in William Eton's book, A Survey of the Turkish Empire which was published in 1799. Eton was hostile to both the Turks and the Arabs because both races were Muslims, hence, in his opinion, enemies of Christianity. However, he portrayed the Arabs somewhat favourably. The Arabs, according to him, patronized knowledge at a time - the Middle Ages - when entire was immersed in ignorance. His praise of the Arabs, however, was not for nothing. In fact he wanted to use the Arabs, especially those

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segments of the Arab society who did not accept or greatly resented Ottoman sovereignty over themselves in order to disintegrate the Turkish Empire. He even advised the British Government to send an agent to watch over the French in Egypt and at the same time try to raise the Arabs both against the French and the Turks. He also delineated the qualifications that such agents were to acquire before embarking upon their mission. That they should be well acquainted with the manners and way of thinking of the Arabs and have such a command of temper and pliancy of Character as to adopt his language to their prejudices and to be able to conciliate and persuade. (1) Over a century later Eton's agent was personified in Lawrence of Arabia who played an important role in destroying the Ottoman Empire.

As a whole the image of the Arabs as portrayed by majority of the eighteenth-century scholars and travelers was considerably favorable. Weaknesses were pointed out but virtues were more highlighted. Arabs as a nation, not as Muslim believers, were especially appreciated. Both the scholars and the travelers were fascinated by the Arabs' love for freedom or their spirit of liberty. This was probably due to the concept of nationalism or national freedom which emerged and consolidated itself in Europe in the

same age. The presence of the idea of national freedom in other ancient peoples was highlighted by Cokley, Sale and others with a view to vindicating the concept of nationalism in Europe.

The nineteenth-century travellers excepting Burckhardt, however, reversed the prevalent trend of the eighteenth century. As a result the image of the Arabs as a freedom-loving nation who were "incapable of servitude" disappeared from the nineteenth-century travel literature. John Ludwig Burckhardt, a Swiss who studied Arabic in England and visited many parts of the Arab world including Mecca and Madina in the first decade of the nineteenth century under the guise of Shaikh Ibrahim Ibn Abdullah, however, followed the eighteenth-century tradition and wrote about the Arabs on the pattern of his immediate predecessors. The Arabs, according to him, were free and hospitable. Burckhardt was especially fascinated by the Bedouins whom he called the pure Arabs and regarded them as an independent nation. "The complete independence the Bedouins enjoy," he wrote, "has alone enabled them to sustain a national character." Burckhardt, in fact, viewed the Bedouins as a distinct social group and made a deep study of the structure of their society. He tried to rationalize or find out the Bedouins' peculiar

reasons or rationale behind their various institutions and practices including raids or highway robberies. Raids, as explained by Barckhardt, were a condemnable crime according to European ethical code but for the bedouins they were not an abominable or punishable offence but a part of their life, almost a widely accepted institution. It was on this ground that instead of punishing a good young raider the concerned tribe used to take pride in him.

Another exception, though in a different sense, was William Lane (1801-1876) whom Bernard Lewis described as the greatest Arabist of the nineteenth century, not only in England but in entire Europe. (1) Lane, known as Mansour Effendi among his Egyptian friends, was passionately interested in Egyptology. He first went to Egypt in 1825 and stayed there up to 1828. The apparent aim of his journey was to learn Arabic language and literature as well as the mores and manners of the Egyptian people.

Lane made a second visit to Egypt in 1833 and closely studied the Egyptian society for about three years. The method of research that he adopted was near to that of modern anthropologists, especially in the sense that he tried his best to understand the Egyptians as they understood themselves. To achieve this purpose Lane, as mentioned earlier, stayed for

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See, 1. Lewis, Bernard, op. cit P. 20.
years in Egypt trying to live as an Egyptian Arab. In his own words,

I have associated, almost exclusively, with Muslims, of various ranks in society. I have lived as they live, conforming with their general habits, and, in order to make them familiar and unreserved towards me on every subject, have always avowed my agreement with them in opinion whenever my conscience would allow me, and in most other cases refrained from the expression of my dissent, as well as from every action which might give them disgust, abstaining from eating food forbidden by their religion, and drinking wine etc., and even from habits merely disagreeable to them, such as the use of knives and forks at meals. (1)

By applying such a scientific method of research Lane succeeded in presenting a realistic study of Egyptian society in his Modern Egyptians. In fact his Modern Egyptians, unlike the accounts of many of his contemporary travellers, is not a subjective discourse on religion, culture and civilization of the Egyptian people; it is rather an account of socio-religious and cultural realities of the then Egyptian society, 'Arab culture and religion,' writes Muhammad Al-Isha, 'were presented not as a set of beliefs to be intellectually apprehended, analysed, rejected, as an assortment of social

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and political modes to be defined and criticised, but as a lived experience. In *Modern Egyptians* the authorial identity is subordinated to the demand of the subject matter.\(^{(1)}\)

Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, however, is not free from defects. In his enthusiasm to present exactly what the Egyptians think and say about themselves he often accepted irrational things or incredible claims made by certain persons without having subjected them to intellectual and critical scrutiny. As a result his *Modern Egyptians* contains things which fall under the category of the *Arabian Nights*.

Nevertheless, despite some shortcomings, Lane's *Modern Egyptians* was a valuable contribution to Arabic studies and rightly came to be regarded as a reliable historical document of the first importance on Egyptian Arabs.

Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, as mentioned earlier, was an expression of Arab realities, but other nineteenth century travellers to the Arab world presented, in varying degree, either their own world view or the peculiar ideologies of their age in their works, and not the socio-economic and religio-political realities of the Middle East. Their approach, as will be seen later on, was subjective rather than objective.

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As discussed earlier the eighteenth-century travellers were influenced by the prevalent trend of their age, that is, nationalism, and under its spell most of them tended to highlight the Arabs as a separate national group in the Ottoman Empire. But the nineteenth-century England was a different world where new ideas such as racism and imperialism were in circulation. The travellers of the period were greatly influenced by the ideologies of their age which in turn naturally affected their approach to the Arabs or the natives of the Orient as a whole.

The nineteenth-century Europe witnessed rapid progress both in natural and social sciences. Equipped with the weapon of knowledge and comparatively advanced military technology many European countries such as England, France and Holland acquired large colonial empires in Africa and Asia. The people of the above mentioned countries were conscious of their belonging to the nations which had become imperial powers. The feeling of belonging to an imperial power gradually gave rise to racist ideas about Europe’s superiority over the Orient. As a result there arose a consciousness of ‘we and they’ that ultimately led to an erroneous pronouncement: ‘We the civilized’ and ‘they the barbarians’ which widely became acceptable in Europe.

Once the idea of Oriental inferiority, both on racial and intellectual planes, was established there developed a
philosophy in Europe that it was the whiteman's burden to civilize the backward races of the Orient. According to the said philosophy the Orient was to be civilized both politically and religiously. The religious backwardness was to be removed by Christian missionaries and the political backwardness by the imperial rulers. The idea was that by adopting Christianity and by accepting the imperial rule as a permanent phenomenon the Orientals would become civilized.

Literature is the mirror of the age in which it is born. This philosophy of literature can be fully applied, at least, to the travel as well as imaginative literature of the nineteenth-century England, for instance, exhibiting the religious trend of his age Sir Walter Scott, in his the Talisman recreated the medieval scene of the Crusades or the struggle between Muslim 'barbarians' and the 'civilized, holy' crusaders. The message he wanted to convey was that Muslims by virtue of their faith were avowed enemy of Christ and Christian civilization. Disraeli's Tancred, likewise, expressed the common political trend of his age in form of Oriental desire to be occupied and ruled by the British. The idea of the Orient's willingness to welcome and accept the British occupation was further strengthened by Kinglake, Burton, Warburton, Doughty and Palgrave. Even Blunt who journeyed among the Arabs in 1830s with avowed anti-imperialism and a mission for Arab independence could not wish away the idea of British
protection of the Arab Caliphate which he recommended to rule in Arabia.

But was it really the desire of the Orient to be conquered and ruled by the British or was it merely a figment of the imagination of British writers and travellers or Britain's own imperialist plan to rule the Orient which found expression in their works?

Infact in the nineteenth century deliberate and concerted efforts were made by the British travellers to justify Britain's imperialist designs on the Orient as well as to popularise the idea that the British were capable of managing the affairs of alien nations including the Arabs. The same mentality was at work behind their criticism of the Ottoman rule in the Arab world. Apparently these were their own ideas or sheer creation of their ultra imaginative minds which had little or nothing to do with the actual realities of the Middle East. Muhammad Al-Taha rightly points out that 'most nineteenth-century writers on the Orient, whether travellers, imaginative writers or politicians expressed in their texts most or their ideology in relation to non-European than the reality of the Orient.'(1) AlTaha further says that 'almost all victorian travellers present us with familiar

Oriental themes but with variations supplied by the authors' different inclinations, psychological crises and class rank in society. They used the East as a means of self expression, a means of making heroes out of themselves, a mirror through which they see their superiority, and a means of giving credibility to their narrative. They went to the East with European ideological concepts of themselves and 'Others' which they confirmed with the slightest contact with Oriental populations. (1)

Al-Taha's view that the nineteenth-century travellers were little concerned with the real conditions of the then Arab world can be further expounded by focusing on the specific ideas of certain important travellers of the period. The nineteenth-century saw a spate of travellers going to the Middle East with their peculiar ideas, prejudices and varying intentions ranging from imperial and missionary zeal to sincere love of knowledge and adventure. However, those who really contributed to the image of the Arabs in England were Warburton, Burton, Blunt, Doughty, Palgrave and Kinglake.

Eliot Warburton went to the Middle East in 1844 and visited many countries including Syria and Egypt. He was typical nineteenth-century traveller and approached the

1. Ibid. p.20.
Arabs with preconceived notions which prompted him to interpret the Arab realities accordingly rather than to depict them as they existed at that time. Moreover, he considered himself to be facially and religiously superior to the Arabs and as a result looked down upon them as inferior and backward. In fact he had some respect for the Arabs of history who lighted up the candle of knowledge in Spain or elsewhere but held a very poor opinion about the present inhabitants of the Arab world. He disliked both the Bedouins and the city Arabs and referred to them as impervious to change. 'Immutability,' he wrote, 'is the most striking characteristic of the East from the ancient strike of Cain and Abel, to the present struggle between the Crescent and the Cross, its people remain in their habits of thought and action less changed than the countries they inhabit.' Warburton further says that the material things in Egypt including the valley of Nile have changed drastically down the ages but 'the Egyptian still cultivates his river-given soil in the manner practised by the subjects of Pharaohs.'

In his book *The Crescent and the Cross* he expounded the racist ideology of his age that the English were superior to the Arabs and that the Christian civilization was more advanced than the Islamic one. Jubilant and happy with the British

occupation of Egypt and her growing influence in other parts of the Fertile crescent he described the then phenomenon as a victory march of Christian faith and British imperialism destined to conquer the Arab world, which in Harborton's opinion, was highly desirous of British occupation. (1) Clearly he was little concerned with a faithful presentation of Arab realities and extremely eager to see his personal prejudices and ideas prevail in the Arab world.

Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) was probably the most important Victorian traveller who contributed more than any one of his contemporaries to the making of Arab image in England. His book, *A Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al Madinah and Mecca* was widely read in England and became a reliable source of information about the Arabs in his time.

Burton's attitude towards the Arabs was one of ambivalence. On the one hand he eulogized the desert and idolized her sons, the Bedouins, as hospitable, manly and freedom loving, especially highlighting their desire for independence from the Turks and on the other advised his government to occupy the Arab countries. He even suggested the ways as to how the Arabs were to be placated and ruled over. Burton's hypocrisy could not remain hidden from the eye of his contemporary, Wilfrid

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Scawen Blunt who criticised him as having little true sympathy with the Arabs he had come to know so well. 'He would at any time, I am sure,' Blunt wrote: further, 'have willingly betrayed them to further English or his own professional interests.'

There is no denying the fact that occasionally Burton idolized the Bedouin Arabs and portrayed the Islamic faith in a somewhat realistic manner though without having understood its inner meaning and penetrated its spiritual depth. But a careful study of his works reveals beyond suspicion that he was 'a racist, imperialist and arch conservative, who was for ever developing ludicrous theories to support his prejudices.' Burton believed that the Europeans or the white-men were superior to non-Europeans and the coloured people, and it was with this view that he justified Britain's imperial designs on the Orient in general and the Arab world in particular. 'It requires,' he wrote, 'not the Ken of a prophet to foresee the day when political necessity...will compel us (the British) to occupy the fountain head of al-Islam.'

Burton often gave, both direct and indirect reasons for his belief in Occidental superiority and Oriental inferiority. He even offered a phycological explanation for Oriental inferiority by misinterpreting the Arab human nature as being...
well fitted, even eager and desirous of European rule:

Yet Egyptian human nature is, like human nature everywhere, contradictory. Hating and despising Europeans, they still long for European rule. This people admire an iron-handed and lion-hearted despotism, they hate a timid and grinding tyranny. Of all foreigners, they would prefer the French yoke, a circumstance which I attribute to the diplomatic skill and national dignity of our neighbour across the Channel. (1)

Burton, thus intact, expressed in his works, not the Arab or Oriental realities, but two very common ideologies of his age, racism and imperialism. He was greatly influenced by both the said ideologies which naturally prejudiced his outlook and attitude towards the Arabs and forced him to look down upon them as an inferior race that, according to him, deserved to be ruled by the superior races of Europe and with an iron hand.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), a contemporary of Burton, however, had quite different views about the Arabs. Blunt had thoroughly journeyed among the Arabs of Egypt and of Najd and found the inhabitants of the two countries different.

from each other in nature and character.

The Egyptians, especially the peasants, according to Blunt were good and honest people having every virtue which would make a happy, well-to-do society', Blunt further described the Egyptian peasants as 'cheerful, industrious, obedient to law and pre-eminently sober'. Moreover, they were 'neither gamblers nor brawlers, nor licentious livers'. They loved their homes, their wives and children and were extremely kind to their oldmen, beggars, even dumb animals. A people with so many virtues were brutally ruled and ill-treated for ages by the Ottomans, Long oppressed, impoverished and over-taxed they had developed a submissive character and lost all ambitions to aspire for political independence or revolt against the cruel system imposed upon them. Hence to put an end to the Ottoman oppression he advised his Government to occupy Egypt. But he soon realized that the British were even worse imperialists who had no regard and programme for Egypt's political independence. As a result he started criticising the British imperial policies, and championed the cause of Arab independence throughout his life.

Unlike the Egyptian population the Arabs of Najd were independent and freedom loving. Blunt found the Arab society of Najd blessed with three great virtues, liberty, equality and brotherhood. The Najdis, according to him, were freer

and enjoyed true democracy. 'Here was a community' he wrote, 'living as our idealists have dreamed, without taxes, without police, without conscription, without compulsion of any kind, whose only law was public opinion, and whose only order a principle of honour.'(1) Blunt pinned his hopes on these Arabs of Najo whom he expected to free the fellow Arabs oppressed by the Ottomans and the British in Egypt or elsewhere and, thus, regain their ancient glory.

Although a Christian by faith Blunt believed in regeneration of Islam, for a revitalized Islam, in his opinion, would help the Arabs attain their political freedom. In his book, The Future of Islam he urged the West to view Islam as a positive force which like its glorious past could still make rich contributions to human knowledge and civilization. Depending on the premise that 'Christendom has pretty well abandoned her hopeless task of converting Islam, as Islam has abandoned her of conquering Europe,' he argued that it was 'surely time that moral sympathy should unite the two great bodies of men who believe in and worship the same God.'(2) What Blunt expected from this hypothetical compromise was that the West particularly England should help the Arab nationalist movements in their struggle against the Ottomans. Furthermore she should try to restore the Caliphate to Mecca under her

1. Ibid. P. 58.
own protection. The Caliphate no longer an empire, Blunt wrote, 'but still an independent sovereignty must be taken under British protection, and publicly guaranteed its political existence, undisturbed by further aggression from Europe.'

It is really surprising to see Blunt advocating British protection for the caliphate while he himself was highly disappointed with the performance of his Government in Egypt where the so-called British protection had become a misnomer. He too was probably influenced, although to a lesser extent, by the prevalent ideology of his age that the British were superior to the Arabs, at least intellectually if not racially, and it was with this view that he suggested to the British Government to educate and prepare the Arabs for self rule.

Charles M. Doughty (1843-1926) was another Victorian traveller who visited Syria, Palestine, Egypt, the Sinai desert and the ancient city of Petra. His visit to the Middle East was motivated by Biblical research. He was a missionary zealot and travelled in the Middle East, not under any disguise, but as a Christian and British national.

Doughty recounted his experiences in his book Travels in Arabia Deserta. His own impression of his travelogue was that:

1. Ibid. P. 44.
I have set down that which I
saw with my eyes and heard
with my ears and thought in my
heart, neither more or less.(1)

But, in reality, his work is fraught with affectations, prejudices and misjudgements. He was not only influenced by the racist and imperialist ideologies of his time but also tired with a missionary zeal and bias that prompted him, in the words of Al-Taha, to call on the Christian countries to take the necessary steps whatever they be, including the occupation of the Islamic heat of Mecca to fulfil their mission which was, in his opinion, the stamping out of the Arab slave trade and in ensuring the safety of the Christians of Arabia.(2)

Intact Doughty saw the Arabs as an 'outgroup' who practised a different culture and religion which he not only detested but even desired either to eliminate from the face of the earth or subjugate it forever:

The Arabian religion of the Sword must be tempered by the sword; and were the daughters of Mecca and Medina led captive, the Moslem should become as Jews.(3)

Doughty was, in fact, a racist, an imperialist and above all a missionary zealot. He believed in the racial superiority of the British and supported their imperialistic

2. Al-Taha, Muḥammad op. cit. op. 18-19.
design on the Arab world. However, his imperialism was not merely political, it was cultural and religious as well. In his view political imperialism was appreciable only when it aimed at imposing Western culture and religion on the Orient.

Alexander William Kinglake was probably the most subjective travel writer of the nineteenth-century England. He journeyed among the Arabs of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Egypt and recounted his experiences or more aptly gave expression to his preconceived notions about the Arabs in his *Eothen*. He travelled in the Arab world mainly through the routes which had already been traced by European travellers and there was nothing left for him to describe as far the landscape, geography, maps of the region he visited, and manners and customs of the people were concerned. He, then, decided to present humorously in his *Eothen* the Arab realities in accordance with the then English attitude and with the ideas he had conceived before coming into actual contact with them. By the time he wrote his travelogue, the *Eothen*, the British parliament was debating, for the first time, the so-called Eastern Question or the possible British policy and attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. There was a common feeling in England that Egypt should be occupied in order to safeguard their route to India. In *Eothen* Kinglake set out to prove that the occupation of Egypt was not merely a British necessity but it was something that the Egyptian people also desired.
In other parts of the Arab world also were traced out people who wished to be conquered by the British. The Lady Hester episode was introduced in *Eothen* with a view to giving expression to Kinglake's own mind that the Syrians were excited by the idea and 'possibility of their land being occupied by the English, and many of them looked upon Lady Hester as a Princess who came to prepare the way for the expected conquest.' Likewise in Lebanon Kinglake found an Arab chief in whose mouth he put his own words. He presented the chief as having 'sagacity to foresee that Europe would intervene authoritatively in the affairs of Syria.'

Kinglake had no word of praise for Islam, the religion of the majority of the Arabs. Islam, both as a religion and as a civilization, according to him, was inferior to Christianity. He, like countless Englishmen of his time, believed in the superiority and overall goodness of British institutions and wanted to impose them on Oriental nations which, according to him, were highly backward. It was with this view that he wished Islam wither away and disappear from the race of the earth.

William Gisforo Palgrave occupies a unique place among the nineteenth-century travellers to Arabia. He was an English

2. Ibid. P. 403.
national but accepted to be an agent of the French Government, the arch rival of the British Empire in the East. The French Government, in fact, had funded Palgrave's journey with a view to getting political information about eastern and central Arabia which they did not want to occupy but only to bring under their sphere of influence. Palgrave, however, had different views. He wanted the French to occupy Arabia in order to advance its political and his (Palgrave's) missionary interests. In fact Palgrave, besides being a political agent of the French, was a devout missionary commissioned by the Society of Jesuits to embark upon his Arabian journey in order to fulfil a religious purpose. Thus Palgrave can be held as a glaring example of not a too rare cooperation between the missionaries and the European imperialists.

As a political agent of the French Government Palgrave studied the Arabs as a race different from and superior to other Oriental races including the Turks. In his opinion the French, in order to promote their own imperial interests, needed to raise the Arabs as a nation, encourage them to revolt against the Turks and form an independent Arab state. But this Arab nationalism, according to Palgrave, was not an end in itself, nor did it aim at establishing a genuinely independent Arab state, rather it was a means for the Europeans, especially the French to have
access to Arabia to fulfil their political aims. He, however, expected the French more than any other European nation to help Christian missionaries in their Arabian enterprise.

Christian mission of the nineteenth century was different from what it is understood today. In today's missionary parlance Christian mission stands for Agape, the love (of God), Kerygma, preaching about Christ and Diakonia, service extended to those in need which often amounts to coercion and psychotropic induction. But in the nineteenth century missionaries understood Christianity as to be a perfectly superior religion and civilization. To them Christianity was not merely a set of beliefs and rituals to be believed and practised by Christians, rather it was Christian's World view, a theory of civilization as well as of history according to which they saw themselves, their civilization, culture and religion as superior to those of 'outgroups' or other religious entities. Their complex of religious and cultural superiority was further mixed up with the two dominant ideologies of the age: racism and imperialism. As a result they went to the Orient or reached the 'outgroups' with a feeling of racial, cultural and religious superiority. As members of the same group to which the European imperialists also belonged they saw Europe's imperialism and expansionist designs on the East as a means for converting Oriental nations, the followers of inferior and backward religions, to superior Christianity.
Palgrave was a typical nineteenth-century missionary. Naturally his approach to Islam and the Wahhabi revivalist movement of central Arabia, despite his claims of objectivity, was highly prejudiced and subjective.

As noted earlier Palgrave regarded the Arabs as a superior race among the Asian nations. However, the Arabs he admired were not the Muslim Arabs of his time but those of pre-Islamic period. The Arabs of his time, in his opinion, were degraded and pushed into a backward situation because of "the Stirling influence of Islam", and due to "the Mahometan drug which paralyses whatever it does not kill", and has 'kept them in intellectual race to be outrun by others more favoured by circumstances, though not perhaps by nature'. Having condemned Islam as to be the main cause of Arab backwardness it was natural for Palgrave to suggest that the Arabs had still potentials to become a master race in Asia if only they abandoned Islam. Naturally the next choice for them, at least in Palgrave's imagination, was Christianity which could help them in becoming a great nation.

The first half of the twentieth century saw many men and women of English origin travelling to the Middle East often with pre-conceived notions or with their peculiar ideas.

is about the Arabs. As well known this period is of vital political importance because the political map of the world, especially of Asia, changed drastically owing to the disintegration and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by Western nations. The travel-writers of the period, more or less, tried to partially mirror political as well as social realities of the age in their works. But in most cases the outlook with which the travellers looked at the Arab World was purely European. Many writers of the period, following the nineteenth-century imperialist tradition, often put their own words in the mouth of some native Arab and, thus, instead of dealing genuinely with the Arab realities, subtly gave expression to their pre-conceived notions and ideas. Gertrude Bell, for instance, mirrored Kinglake's imperialist mentality on the one hand and expressed a common English desire of her age on the other when she found a Syrian Arab to say that: 'Even the Muslim population hated the Ottoman Government, and would infinitely rather be ruled by a foreigner, what though he were an infidel—preferably by the English, because the prosperity of Egypt had made so deep an impression on Syrian minds'.

Other travellers of the period were also, more or less, like Gertrude Bell. For instance Lawrence and Captain Shakespear were British political agents and spies.

hence bound to express only what they considered to be in the interest of Britain. The two travellers who became famous for their championing of the cause of Arab independence were in fact racist in the sense that they believed in political and intellectual inferiority of the Arabs who could be managed and manipulated by a few tactful agents to serve the British interests.

The theme of the Arabs' political inferiority was common to all travellers of the period. Even Philby, who is well known for his anti-imperialist views, believed, in the beginning of his political and administrative career, that the Arabs were yet not fully prepared for self-rule. For example he, by accepting and advocating the Anglo-French Declaration of 8th November, 1918, subscribed to the view that the Arabs needed Europe's political and intellectual assistance to stand on their feet and run their show independently. In fact, it was only after his resignation from the government service that he began to support the idea of complete Arab independence.

The twentieth-century British travellers, especially of its first half were nationalist as well as imperialist in their outlook. In the process of their political and literary career many of them became 'Arabophile' mainly by
advocating the so-called interests of the Arabs. However, a close scrutiny and anatomy of their approach to the Arabs and their problems would reveal that, with probable exception of Philby, their championing of the Arab cause was essentially a part of their overall strategy to serve the British interests.

It is with these views or the above-mentioned approach i.e. the Europe's political superiority and the Arabs' political inferiority, that the writer has dealt with the ideas of some important travellers of the first half of the twentieth century in this work. Obviously, and naturally it was not possible for him to discuss the views of all travellers of the period; rather one had to be selective. However, the travellers, Gertrude Bell, Captain Shakespeare, Lawrence and Philby, who have been selected for this study were most representative travel-writers of their time and hence it is hoped that this study would cover up and truely represent the common social, political and religious trends which the travel-writers of the period under discussion thoroughly discussed in their works.

Most of the above-mentioned writers travelled to the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century, and were connected, in one or another way, with the events of far-reaching consequences that took place in that period.
The most important event that changed the map of the Middle East was the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire that the First World War brought about. This led to the creation of many Arab countries most of which were put under British and French mandates. The idea of an exclusively Jewish State which became a reality in 1948 was also conceived and put forward in the same period. Thus the present political map of West Asia was in fact carved in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, many of its present political realities are either a reflection of the then events or the consequences of the policies adopted and practised by the then British and French governments, the Arab leaders and the Zionists.

Bell, Shakespeare, Lawrence and Philby all played a role in the political drama of the period under discussion. It is, therefore, expected that a comprehensive study of their ideas would greatly help to understand not only the past but also the present realities of West Asia.