CHAPTER–ONE

LITERARY ORIENTALISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE – A HISTORICAL SURVEY
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Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said, is

a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest, richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations, languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other.¹

Moreover, Orientalism is a way of thought, speech or manners, or the disposition, to adopt such a quality or character. It also refers to proficiency in Oriental languages and literature etc. In other words, it is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinctions made between the Orient and the Occident. In a sense, Orientalism is a library or archive of information commonly and unanimously held. What binds the archive together is a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective.

Orientalism expresses different connotations. At one level, the Orient is an integral part of European culture and civilization. It represents that part culturally and ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary,
scholarship, imagery and doctrines etc. Academically, anyone who teaches, studies or writes about the Orient contributes to Orientalism. The person who writes about the Orient may be a man of letters, anthropologist, historian, statesman or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspect – he is an Orientalist. The most accepted designation for Orientalism is the academic one. The term Oriental has been employed by many writers such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope and Byron. From cultural, geographical and civilizational points of view, it refers to Asia or the East. One could speak in Europe of an Oriental atmosphere, Oriental disposition or an Oriental personality.

Orientalism may be discussed and examined as the integral institution for dealing with Oriental setting and teachings. According to Edward Said, Orientalism derives from a particular closeness experienced between Britain and France and the Orient, which until the early nineteenth century had really meant only India and the Bible lands. From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II France and Britain dominated the Orient and Orientalism since World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did. Out of that closeness, whose dynamic is enormously productive even if it always demonstrates the comparatively greater strength of the Occident.
The aim of the present Chapter is to conduct a historical survey of literary Orientalism. It was religious differences rather than antagonism that compelled the West to learn first about the Orient. The gradual rise and spread of Islam as a religion in 622 and its political and legislative powers under Prophet Muhammad's religious leadership, made Europeans familiar with it. According to Martha P. Conant, 'Oriental' means something pertaining to or derived from "those countries, collectively, that begin with Islam on the eastern Mediterranean and stretch through Asia".\(^3\) So far as knowledge of Islam is concerned, R.W. Southern brands the period 700-1100 as "the Age of Ignorance".\(^4\)

The first real, literally face-to-face contact between Europe and the Islamic world was brought about by the most dramatic confrontation - the Crusades in the Middle Ages (1096-1271). Though the Crusading movement was essentially a religious movement, secular tendencies and forces were at work too, including commercial ones. Its cultural and historical significance in forging links between Europe and the Islamic world is immense. As pointed out by Dorothee Metlitzki, the Crusades resulted in the Arab influence on a wide range of Frankish activities on military techniques on vocabulary, on food, clothing and ornamentation\(^5\).

The genesis of Orientalism in English literature dates back to the Middle Ages when many stories had appeared in England through the religio-political, socio-cultural, military and travel contacts with the Orient. From an early period
by various waves of influence Oriental fiction was brought to England. So far as eleventh century is concerned, fictional accounts of the marvels of India are found in Anglo-Saxon traditions of legends concerning Alexander the Great. During the Middle Ages,

Eastern stories drifted across Europe by way of Syria, Byzantium, Italy and Spain. Merchants and travellers, missionaries, pilgrims, and Crusaders aided the oral transmission of this fiction, and gave to Europe Latin translations of four great collections of genuine Oriental tales: *Sindebad*, *Kalila and Dimna, or The Fables of Bidpai*, *Disciplina Clericalis*; and *Baram and Josaphant*.⁶

All these works came out in England in the form of metrical romances, apologues, legends, and tales of adventure. The oral poetry of medieval France — the *Chanson de Geste* provides a rich literary source for the study of the image of the Orient. These heroic poems, chiefly meant for the recreational purpose of the public, had tremendous influence on European literature. As to English literature, the Middle Ages English romances deal with the Saracens and their world. However, in the words of Dorothee Metlitzki,

they are essentially vehicles of fanatical propaganda in which the moral ideal of chivalry is subservient to the requirements of religion, politics and ideology. Pagans are wrong and Christians are right
what they do. They are primarily concerned with one basic theme: the war of Christianity against Islam.⁷

Accordingly, romances and other works of the period depict Muslims as despots, violent, authoritative, callous and irrational pagans. In a similar vein, William Langland (C. 1330 - C. 1386) in his Piers Plowman employs the expression 'Mahomet' for a false god.

From the Muslim occupation of Spain in 715, which lasted until 1492, a very rewarding European interaction with the Orient flowed. It was a cultural transplant on Western soil and it worked well in transmitting Oriental ideas. Medieval literature exhibited the tradition of earlier religious polemics where Muslims are portrayed as villains. Middle English romances played an important role in promoting Orientalism. These Romances contain fantastic episodes - Saracen giants slain by Christian heroes. Rana Kabbani points out:

Romances of Sir Bevis of Hampton contain the prototype of the enamoured Saracen princess. She is ready to serve her knight with slavish devotion. He inspires ardent desires in her, and this because she is inherently lusty. Muslim princesses are the wooing women of medieval temptation scenes, who walk unbidden into bed-chambers and proffer their bodies only to be virtuously refused. These seductresses will even forsake their religion for the love of the Knight.⁸
Besides, frequent military encounters on this front contributed enormously to culture and social exchange and gradually to a better comprehension of the Orient. Special mention may be made of the Romance *Floris and Blancheflur*, composed in the middle of thirteenth century, which is remarkable for its Arabian theme and Islamic design. However, this and other Romances of the period depict Muslims as irrational pagans and the Prophet Muhammad as an impostor. In Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, a note of missionary zeal is too evident. For example, the daughter of the emperor of Rome, ties her nuptial knot with Sultan of Syria in order to convert him to Christianity. The polemical motive of the tale is deepened by derisive references to the Quran (332) and the Prophet (224, 336 and 340). However, Chaucer speaks positively of several Oriental philosophers such as Alchabitius (Abd al Aziz c. 960) in *Astrolabe* (1, 8, 13), Alacen (Ibn al Haytham 965-1039) in the *Squire's Tale* (232), Azrachel (al-Zarqali 1029-1087), Averroes or Averrois (Ibn Rushd) and Avicen (Ibn Sina (980-1037) in 'General Prologue' (432), and *Pardoner's Tale* (889-890) and Algus or Argus (al-Khwarizmi 780-850) in *Book of the Duchess* (435), *Miller's Tale* (3210) and *Astrolable* (1, 7, 6 and 8, 6). Chaucer's *Squire's Tale* is set in an Oriental locale i.e. at Sarray, an affluent commercial town established by Batu Khan, a Central Asian ruler.

John Lydgate's "Fall of Princess" (c. 1440) and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* are very important pieces of English literature, which deal with Islam and Muslims. 'Fall of Princess' by Lydgate is perhaps the first English literary piece
which deals with Prophet Muhammad in detail. This book gives a very negative account of Prophet Muhammad: he is described as a black magician, necromancer and bogus prophet. He is charged with leading his followers astray. Besides, his divine revelations and prophethood are dismissed. In other words, Lydgate’s “Fall of Princess” re-echoes some of the polemical assaults on the Prophet.

In addition, the general development of the things Oriental in England was because of the direct impact of innumerable translations from the French, and on the other hand, owing to the presence of Oriental tendencies in England akin to those in France. The Romantic spirit, the tendency to moralize and philosophize, and the penchant for satire were common in both the countries. Since the fall of Constantinople (1453), the Turks had been a threat to Europe. Their ascendancy resulted in the reign of Solymon the Magnificent (1520-1566); their perpetual advance upon Christendom was checked only by their defeat at the battle of Lepanto (1571). In 1581, with the establishment of the Levant Company, the interest in the Orient spread tremendously. Besides, diplomatic missions and trade links between Europe and the Orient contributed to a steady flow of visitors, some of the prominent figures being Sir Henry Blount, George Sandy and William Lithogow. Travellers, merchants, missionaries and ambassadors returned with information and entertaining stories. Their collections were followed by warm imitations which indicated that the Orient was becoming more popular and easily accessible. From then on, the public had access to authentic information about
Islam, Prophet Muhammad and the Quran and the number of persons in the West seriously interested in Islam increased considerably.

In sixteenth century, the English version of the *Gesta Romanorum* and of the *Fables of Bidpai* were published which stand out as a good literary source for studying the image of the Orient. In 1603, the appearance of Richard Knolle's famous work *General History of the Turks*, generated a new interest in Turkey, and was a major factor in strengthening the interest for prospective writers.

One of the dynamic figures to popularize Orientalism was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762). She deserves special attention. She is one of the very few women travellers who gives an eyewitness account of the Oriental society. For the salient Oriental features of sexuality and violence and its political aspect in terms of the harrowing suppression of women, the harem stood in the West as a metaphor of tyranny and sexual violence. But Lady Montagu refutes its erotic and sensational characteristics. The Islamic concept of sex, free from guilt and sin, strikes Lady Montagu. She describes polygamy positively, probably for the first time. Being a woman, she was in a better position to interact with harem women. She looks into it from a different, broader perspective. In fact, the Western account of Islamic world is not neutral. But Lady Montagu gives an unbiased description of the things Oriental. Far from repeating the conventional image, voyeuristic pleasure and sexual fantasy, her account of harem is apt. A highly striking characteristic of her *Letters* is that it often provides her fruitful and rational discussions with Turk males and females on a variety of literary, political
and social issues. This feature signifies a serious dialogue between the West and the East.

By seventeenth century, Oriental tales were popular in England because of a neutral reaction against the preponderous classicism of Boileu. Furthermore, some British scholars specialized in the Oriental languages and literature which boosted the prospects of Orientalism. Another important factor was the appearance of the Arabian Nights (1706), which is full of vigour, life, and colour, and the glamour of the Orient that opened a novel chapter in the annals of literary Orientalism. Broadly speaking, the first English version of the Arabian Nights marks an important event in the history of literary Orientalism. Historically, the period corresponds to the years 1704 and 1712. With Arabian Nights Orientalism increased considerably. The Arabian Nights was widely known in European society, especially in England. It was perennial in influence in that it constitutes the intrinsic point for later Orientalism. After the Arabian Nights (1706), Turkish Tales (1708) and Persian Tales (1714), the best imaginative Oriental tales are the English version of pseudo-translations. The first to come in English language was The Travels and Adventure of Three Princess of Serendip (1772) from the French of De Maillli, which further widened the range and scope of Orientalism.

The history of the Oriental tale in England, in eighteenth century, may be branded as a fragment in the development of English Romanticism. The eighteenth century witnessed the advent of modern and scholarly translations of
various works directly made from Oriental languages which influenced the later 
poetry of Romantic writers such as Southey, Moore, Byron and others. The 
prominent translators and philologists whose works helped those who wanted 
first-hand knowledge about the Turks, Persian, and their literature. But it took 
more than eight centuries of learning, research, and teaching by a host of 
scholars of several nations of Europe to provide the tools and material for the 
study that enabled Orientalists to translate and emulate Arabic writers in the 
poetic, religious and other fields. Taking into account the vast number of 
eighteenth century Oriental tales, Martha P. Conant classifies them into the 
following four groups – imaginative, moralistic, philosophic and satiric:

The imaginative group, the earliest, and, at the beginning of the 
century, the most significant, diminished, as the other groups 
increased in strength, but revived again near the end of our period 
in Beckford's *Vathek*. The moralistic and philosophic groups are 
prominent in the periodical essays from Addison to Dr. Johnson. The 
philosophic group comprises besides *Rasselas* several 
translations from Voltaire's *contes-philosophique*. The satiric group 
is chiefly exemplified by the pseudo-letters culminating, in English, 
in Goldsmith’s *Citizen of the World*, and by Count Hamilton’s 
entertaining parodies.⁹

It needs to be stressed that the Oriental stories met with both public 
approval and disapproval. The full importance of this is comprehended only when
we recognize it as a test of the public opinion. In Western society the East was perceived as a dangerous field where Islam flourished and monstrous races multiplied. Muslims were seen as a monstrous race, and depicted as black, ugly and violent. The animosity generated anti-Islam polemics. One of the strategies of this polemic was to ridicule Prophet Muhammad in the most scathing manner. He was described as chief seducer and believed to have indulged in sexual debauchery. Thomas Browne's *Vulgar Errors*, however, corrects a misconception about the Prophet's hanging tomb, reported by Marlowe in *Tamburlaine* and Beaumont in *The Scornful Lady* and at a much later date by Thomas Moore in *Lalla Rookh* and Robert Southey in *Roderick*. The "medieval report that the Prophet's body hangs in an iron chest in mid-air in a mosque is dismissed by Browne as evidently false". The negative attitude which persisted in European society, especially in England, was owing to impending Turkish aggression. Addison used several Oriental stories to illustrate philosophical ideas and composed famous Oriental Tales – *The Vision of Mirza* and *Ortogrul of Basra*. The scene is laid in Baghdad, and the narrative opens with a description of Ortogrul wandering in "the tranquillity of meditation" along the streets. He is taught the value of slow and constant industry in a dream, and like Mirza, he beholds a vision from a hilltop.

Not only Addison's Oriental tales but also Voltaire's brilliant manipulation of splendour apparently contributed much to the immediate popularity of both the French and the English versions. In France, Voltaire had issued the *Conte-
philosophique which was one of the most distinct imitations of the genuine Oriental work. As we take into account the moralistic group as whole, we find the general scarcity of literary merit. Apart from Parnell's *Hermit*, Marmontel's *Contes*, certain stories by Addison and Steele, and the *Bidpai*, there is not much of remarkable intrinsic value:

The moral Oriental tales composed by Addison, Johnson, and Miss Edgeworth are the least valuable part of their work, far inferior, for instance, to the philosophic Oriental tales, *The Vision of Mirza* and *Rasselas*. Only unusual genius can make an art of moralizing. Average writers, - like the authors of the fifteenth century morality plays or the eighteenth century moralists when they turned to Oriental fiction, - in their desire to express a universal truth concerning human character or conduct, eliminate so many individualizing traits that their personages become mere abstractions. They do not know the secret of embodying these abstract ideas in concrete and appropriate types, and hence their work lacks the beauty and universal human interest of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Fairie Queene*, or the parables of Scripture yet the minor writers of any period - and the same is true of minor works by great writers frequently reflect most clearly the current opinions of their age. For that reason the Moralistic Group of Oriental tales possesses a distinct historical value.¹¹
The influence of the *Arabian Nights*, the tales of Addison and Johnson had paved the way for tradition of literary Orientalism in the Romantic period. Like Addison, Johnson wrote Oriental tales mainly for instruction, couched in an amusing style. In addition to this, a general moralistic direction to the uses of Oriental or pseudo-Oriental material, Addison initiated the method employed in writing moral Oriental tales. Dr Johnson's *Rambler* and Addison's original stories in the *Spectator*, represent examples of the genre. The Oriental tales enormously contributed to Romantic spirit of the day. Throughout nineteenth century the influence of Oriental elements is evident. A particular reason for the popularity of these Oriental stories is owing to a reactionary spirit. It offered Romantic revolt against neo-classicism. These tales exhibit a love of adventure and of mystery; a passion to kindle the feeling of horror, delight or surprise.

The antagonism to Islam and Muslims was an integral part of the mind of most of travel writers. But all the representations made by them were not entirely negative. There were some who tried to appreciate the religio-cultural values of the Orient. According to a survey made by Rana Kabbani:

The projection of evil onto a far away culture was also a significant aspect of medieval Europe's bulwark of bigotry. And since it had a portentous opponent in the Islamic state, it fashioned a polemic to check whatever influence such a rival state might have. This polemic was highly charged with hostility, and notable for the fanaticism that engendered it. Islam was seen as the negation of
Christianity; Muhammad as an impostor, an evil sensualist, an Antichrist in alliance with the Devil. The Islamic world was seen as Anti-Europe, and was held in suspicion as such. Christian Europe had entered a confrontation with Islamic Orient that was cultural, religious, political and military, one that would decide from then on the very nature of the discourse between West and East.\textsuperscript{12}

Islam and Christianity, the two themes, which emerge from the European narrative, seem to be very striking. Firstly, the insistent claim that Orient was a haven for sexual gratification and licentiousness, and secondly, it was a domain marked by violence. These themes are very significant up to the present time with varying degrees of emphasis. The violence in the Orient was often associated with sexuality in Galland's writings. This was a common feature of European travelogue. These travelogues were part of the Orientalism that abetted imperialism.

Apart from travelogues, translations of literary works played a vital role in the spread of Western literary Orientalism. Along with Arabian Nights, the publication of Persian Tales (1714) translated from French by Ambrose Philips catered for the Western literary Orientalism. It is a sequel to Arabian Nights. These works have a similar plan - a frame-tale which introduces and concludes the collection and links the successive stories. In Persian Tales, instead of a Sultan who has lost faith in women, the central figure is the Princess of Cashmere (Kashmir), who, having dreamt that she was an ungrateful stag
abandoning a hind, lost faith in men and made up her mind never to enter into matrimonial alliance. She is austerely beautiful. Her beauty drove men crazy. Her father, the king, was in despair. It was her old nurse who took the office to convert her by stories of loyal lovers. Eventually, she was persuaded to marry the Prince of Persia.

The Persian Tale (1714), in describing scenes of beauty or of the horror is more lavish than Arabian Nights. Like Arabian Nights, The Thousand and One Days is rich in Oriental material with magic and enchantment. Coming to the romances, A Beautiful Turk (1720) is another translation of the French romance by G. de Bremond. Oriental fiction too, deserves attention. The heroic romances, the realistic tales, and the eclogues, are of much value. They are primarily important as evidence of the Orientalising tendency. One of the towering figures of pseudo-translation was Thomas Simon Guellette (1683-1766). He is regarded as one of the most facile and prolific French writers whose collections were translated into English namely China Tales (1725), Mogul Tales (1736) and Tartarian Tales (1759). These translations popularized Western literary Orientalism considerably.

In 1734, it was George Sale's translation of the Quran into English which acted as a spur in spreading Orientalism. In 1749, Zadig, the French work was translated only one year after its completion. It attained popularity in England because one of its chapters, The Hermit was based on the poem by Thomas Panell. Zadig is a variant on the theme of the Letters Persanes (1721). By the
time Zadig appeared, the European critics of manners and thought in the garb of an Oriental had become accustomed to Oriental stories. The translation of Arabic poetry into English began in 1750 with the publication of Sir William Jones' Moallakat. Since then, translations of Arabic poetry appeared in every generation.

In 1760s and 1770s some more translations appeared; and in 1780s and 1790s more Oriental tales were produced. The period, as a whole, despite the transitional nature, has a distinctive character. From the days of Sir William Jones to those of Rudyard Kipling the direct translations by Orientalists have been characterized by an increase in the knowledge of the Orient. Robert Bage's The Fair Syrian (1787) is a huge novel in the form of letters which deals with the adventures of the Occidental heroine among the Turks. Moreover, Mrs. Pilkingston's The Asiatic Princess (1800) is regarded as an Oriental work historically only because of its heroine. The heroine is the Princess Merjee of Siam and references are made to Eastern slaves. From an early period by various waves of influence, Oriental fiction had been brought to England. The pseudo-translation that deserves mention is the New Arabian Nights (1792) from the French of Dom Chavis and M. Cazotte. This book is reckoned to be the continuation of the Arabian Nights, translated from the Arabic. Some scholars believe that the translators used Arabic manuscripts as its basis besides many alterations in the book, branding it as a pseudo-translation. Besides, the Orient had always its exotic appeal to excite the imagination of creative artists and to
kindle the curiosity of the general public. Of all the wide lands open to the wandering imagination, none had more seminal charm than the fantastic East.

Historically, the genre of pseudo-letters was continued by Charles-Riviere Dufresny in his *Amusemens* (1699), which culminated in the *Letters Persanes* (1721) of Montesquieu. Undoubtedly, the character sketches of the seventeenth century, both in France and England, contributed to the pseudo-letters. The work of Marana, Dufresny, and Brown was continued by Addison and Steele, the first notable English man of letters to apply the Oriental material as a vehicle for satire. In the case of moralistic and philosophic groups of Oriental tales gave the initial impulse; in this instance, though they did not originate the satiric tendency they did assist in popularizing it.¹³

It was the appearance of Antoine Galland's French translation of *Les mille et une Nuits* in early eighteenth century, that gave a new force to the widespread interest in the life and thought of the East. Galland, the first translator of the *Arabian Nights* into French, paved the way for the full blooming of this genre. The translation of the French version into other languages of Europe followed immediately and also stimulated imitations of Arabic tales into many European languages. Antoine Galland’s journal that Byron kept during his visits demonstrates his constant search for and fascination with Oriental works, especially manuscripts. Galland translated several manuscripts from Arabic, Persian and Turkish. He adopted the path of his teacher, D'Herbelot. As D'Herbelot's huge work *Bibliothèque Oriental* remained incomplete because of his
death, it became mandatory on Galland to complete it and introduce it to the public. He had made certain observations on the newly encountered world of Constantinople. Though he was instrumental in expanding Oriental setting, like many European before him, he highlighted the despotic and violent nature of the Orient. The violence of the East is often associated with sexuality in Galland's entries.

Next to Oriental literature, paintings by Oriental painters exercised much influence in the late fifteenth century. Lucas Van Leyden's "Daughters of Lot" is probably the first European painting with a distinct Eastern imagery. Francesco Gauardi had painted some forty-six paintings on Turkish life. Van Dyck painted Sir Shirley as an Oriental clad in a big turban in order to deepen the effect of his being a rich and prosperous man. In eighteenth century, the Islamic land was regarded as the domain of ornamentation and illumination. The image of the Orient in these paintings is marked by eroticism, richness in both costume and splendour. The Islamic world stood as a site where physical desires were not unquenchable.

Let us now switch over to the Romantic period in order to discuss the treatment of the Orient in the light of certain historical developments. From Fairyland to the far East, these two streams began to flow into the main current of French Romanticism. The Romanticists of the day were fascinated by the intriguing stories of cadis, slaves, merchants and calendars. In the early days of nineteenth century the treatment of Islam was enhanced and promoted by certain
historical developments. Particular mention should be made of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt (1798) which brought awareness among Englishmen about the strategic military power of the Oriental lands. Next to the expedition to Egypt, the War of Independence in Greece (1821-1828) put the Islamic world again firmly on the public agenda. This war of Independence, reckoned as the struggle of the oppressed Greeks against Ottoman despotism, attracted widespread and active sympathy, and Byron enthusiastically responded to it.

The availability of authentic works on the Orient is another outstanding feature of Romantic period. Nonetheless, the Oriental work directly contributed to the imaginative inheritance of later writers. Its impact is manifestly found in the poetical works of Byron, Southey and Moore. The fantastic Oriental locale attracted the Romantics, driven by their urge for a return to primitive nature.

In Romantic period prominent writes like William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Southey, Moore and Keats provide instances of literary Orientalism. In Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (V, 86-102), the dream of the Arab represents a significant transition in literary Orientalism in the Romantic period. Pope, in *The Dunciad*, portrays Arabs as ignorant people who are opposed to learning and accuses them of burning libraries. Unlike Pope, Wordsworth considers them as intellectuals who have contributed to world knowledge and learning. Wordsworth acknowledges the Arab preservation and transmission of knowledge which helped retrieve Greek scholarship. Besides, Wordsworth's Arab stands out as a culture-hero. Wordsworth's attitude towards Orientals in *The Prelude* is positive.
Not surprisingly, the works of all major Romantic poets are marked by copious references to the Orient. Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' employs certain images such as the dome and the caves, the damsel and dulcimer, flashing eyes and the floating hair which are reflective of possible Islamic sources. Breyer "Identifies the Abyssinian maid in 'Kubla Khan' with the houri of the Muslim heaven."\(^{14}\) The dome is a recurrent image in Jones' The Seven Fountains: An Eastern Allegory. The images of the damsel and dulcimer are suggestive of the luxury of the Oriental palace life, clearly described in travel literature of the day. The dancer with 'flashing eyes', 'floating hair' shows a striking similarity to the account of whirling dervishes - the Muslim mystics who went into a trace in their ecstatic communion with God.

The Orientalism of Shelley (1792-1822) is essentially a means for demonstrating his radical views on the issues confronting Europe in his day. In Revolt of Islam (1817), Shelley's treatment of Islam and the Muslim is markedly negative. In the poem Muslims are found rebelling against their own ruler, Othman, rather than against an enemy of Islam. A highly remarkable feature of Shelly's Orientalism is his adherence to convention in depicting a negative view.

Notwithstanding the substantial literary Orientalism in the works of the above-mentioned Romantic writers, others such as Leigh Hunt, Keats, Crabbe and Landor too, have employed Oriental material. Some of the works reflective of Orientalism are Southey's epics namely Thalaba (1801) and The Curse of Kehama (1810), Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh (1817) and The Loves of Angels
(1823) and Keats' *Endymion*. Byron's contemporaries - Robert Southey and Thomas Moore contributed much to Western literary Orientalism which is evident from their copious notes appended to their works. What prompts Southey to employ Oriental material in his works is his interest in mythology. In one of his letters addressed to C.W. Williams Wynn, he says:

> You know my plan to exhibit all the fit mythologies in the form. After this there will remain the Runic, the old Persian, the classical ... and perhaps the Japanese, the Jewish as romancified by the Rabbis, and the Catholics in all its glory.\(^\text{15}\)

In composing his works, Southey was prompted by a staunch moral ideal - the victory of good over evil. In pursuance of this aim, his narrative poems *Thalaba*, and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) deal with Oriental material, and present a negative picture of Islam and Hinduism respectively. When Southey composed these epics, India was rapidly falling under the British rule and the Clapham sect, an Evangelical group, had mounted a vigorous campaign for seeking parliament's approval for conversion and mission. Set against the backdrop; Southey's vitriolic attack on the corrupt, evil practices of Oriental society in *Thalaba* and on the barbaric Hindu customs such as 'sati' (widow burning on the husband's death) in
The Curse of Kehama seems to endorse the Evangelists' call for rooting out such abominations.¹⁶

Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817) and *The Loves of the Angels* (1823) abound in Oriental material. Thomas Moore (1779-1852) played an instrumental role in spreading Western literary Orientalism. It was Byron who had urged Moore to draw on the Orient. Byron suggested to Moore some works on Turkish history when he was planning to compose *Lalla Rookh*. Unlike Southey, Moore was not interested in dealing with remarkable forms of mythology among mankind. Moore seems to be attracted simply by the contemporary vogue for Orientalism, which was popularised especially by Byron. Moore employs Oriental material for the Irish cause. In *Lalla Rookh*, Moore conveys his political message through Oriental characters. This view is corroborated by following observation:

In the two stories of *Lalla Rookh*, namely 'The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan' and 'The Fire-Worshippers', the heroes are rebels, taking up cudgels against the establishment. There is a striking similarity between the struggle of the Fire-Worshippers' and the Catholic uprising in Ireland; Hafed and Hinda, the leading characters, have much in common with Robert Emmet and Sara Curran, champions of the Irish cause. Mokanna in 'The Veiled Prophet' is patterned after Daniel O'Connell, the Irish
demagogue, in order to condemn a religious fanatic; Mokanna fans the prejudices of the masses and this eventually leads to sheer anarchy. Robert Emmett and Sarah Curran reappear, once again in 'The Veiled Prophet' as Azim and Zelica - young naïve lovers with revolutionary ardour.\(^{17}\)

Conventionally, most of Moore's characters conform to the tradition of Western literary Orientalism. In *Lalla Rookh*, Feramorz, the narrator, is the self-accusing Muslim who condemns his own religion. His anthropomorphic description of Allah (p. 207) borders on blasphemy.

In Keats's *Endymion* some fables are apparently extracted from the *Arabian Nights*, *Vathek* and *Thalaba*. On Keats's Orientalism Colvin makes this insightful remark:

The scenery, indeed, is often not merely of a Gothic vastness and intricacy: there is something of Oriental bewilderment - an *Arabian Nights* jugglery with space and time'. Douglas Bush lists the *Arabian Nights* and *Vathek* as possible sources for Keats's mythology in *Hyperion*. In sum, although Keats's Orientalism is peripheral, it does point to the strong influence of particular texts.\(^{18}\)
To sum up, the study of Islam and Muslim by the West has not been a neutral and scholarly exercise. The errors and misconceptions about Islamic world are found in almost all works. In the following chapters the focus will be on the distinctive features of Byron's Orientalism in order to examine whether he conforms to tradition or presents a positive view of things Oriental.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid; p. 4.


5. Ibid; p. 2.


12. Rana Kabbani, op. cit., p. 5.


