

Edward Said  
(1935-2003)



# **ORIENTALISM**



- Edward Said was born in west Jerusalem. He spent his early years in Egypt and remaining life in America. He has described as the most influential public intellectual and literary critic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Some his works are:
  - Beginnings-intentions & methods(1975)
  - Orientalism(1978)
  - The question of Palestine(1979)
  - Culture and imperialism(1993)
  - Covering Islam(1981)



- Published in 1978, *Orientalism*, is Edward Said's best-known work and one of the most influential scholarly books of the 20th century.
- In it Said examined Western scholarship of the "Orient," specifically of the Arab Islamic world (though he was an Arab Christian).
- He argued that early scholarship by Westerners in that region was biased and projected a false and stereotyped vision of "otherness" on the Islamic world that facilitated and supported Western colonial policy.

# Orientalism



- The book written by Edward Said divided into three parts:

**Scope:** It focuses of western representation

**Structure and restructure:** It is descriptive explanation of the ideas if the writers of 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

**Orientalism now:** analyses modern orientalism. In this discusses French and British Orientalism



- Orientalism is a perspective of interpreting the Eastern world by the Western world.
- It is an academic discipline developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- Orientalism is a style of thought that West is superior and East is inferior.
- Whereas- East is orientalism- West is Occidentalism
- Began with Post-colonialism-to post modernism- to orientalism.
- Orientalism begun in European Imperialism and then moved to America and Western countries. Westerns always misinterpreted the Eastern countries especially Arab countries and India.



- Three aspects of Orientalism:
- Orientalism is a particular way of thinking (by west)
- Orientalism is an academic discipline (west)
- Orientalism is a corporate institution for dealing with Orient.
- The Orient: The East
- The Occident: The West



- According to Said Western world ruled the Eastern world through their literature, business models, corporate institutions. Western World feel that Eastern are like animals and uncultured and uncivilized. Europeans narrated that they are making Asians civilized and educated. But the reality of entirely different.
- This approach of Europeans challenged by Edward Said. According to him orientalism is a worldview of false depiction of the eastern world by the West.
- They written about Asians and Africans without visiting these countries. They narrated that Middle East counties are known form terrorism. They are terrorist. Through their books they wrote” Europe is the best, East is worst, Europeans are civilized and Eastern are uncivilized.



## **Occidents**

- The Western World(bias to..)
- Imperials (ಸಾಮ್ರಾಜ್ಯಶಾಹಿ)
- Eurocentric bias as:
- Self (superior) white men

## **Orients**

- The Eastern world
- Weak, eccentric, despotic, barbaric, uncivilized
- Other (Inferior) Black men



- Orientalism” is a way of seeing that imagines, emphasizes, exaggerates and distorts differences of Arab peoples and cultures as compared to that of Europe and the U.S. It often involves seeing Arab culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and at times dangerous.
- In “Orientalism,” Edward Said describes current Western stereotyping of Arabs as “irrational, menacing, untrustworthy, anti-Western, dishonest, and — perhaps most importantly — prototypical.” These attitudes are the direct result of pre-19th-century Orientalism



- Edward Said opens his introduction to Orientalism by arguing that "The Orient was almost a European invention" (Orientalism, p.1). He goes on to explain that "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (ibid, p.1-2).
- Said claims that Orientalism is a man-made discourse. He was influenced by the thoughts of Foucault.
- The fact that Orientalism is a discourse does not mean it is a lie that would simply disappear by pointing out the truth. It is rather a construction of reality which is embedded in very factual mechanism of reality ranging from politics and military through law and economics all the way to literature and cinema.
- All these rely on what Said calls "an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" (ibid, p.2)



- Said's Orientalism analyses mostly texts, but he strongly holds that there is no separation between ideas, images and representations and actual material reality.
- Therefore he uses his analysis of texts to show how Orientalism has formed as a highly powerful system of control due to the combination of actual institutions of power and discursive ones. Both military and literary excursions, both political and cultural endeavors, both administrative and anthropological practices and theories all served together to establish Europe's superiority over the Orient.





- Said continues to blame contemporary research in being Eurocentric by not recognizing its own bias position and the political nature of its so called "pure" knowledge.
- Said demonstrates how a "canon" of knowledge was crystallized to serve as the basis for everything that could be written by the West about the East (and even if an Eastern person were to write about himself, he would also have to abide by these premises in order to be heard and considered).





- Edward Said's Orientalism describes how the science of orientalism developed as a system of knowledge in modern times.
- According to Said, the Western Orientals structured the world as made of two opposing elements, *ours* and *theirs*. These were not just geographical divisions but more importantly epistemological ones.
- The West and East were to be cultural distinctions, differences in civilization or lack of it.
- In Western eyes orientals were incapable of taking care of themselves, they were lazy, lustful, irrational and violent but also exotic and mysterious. The self-proclaimed superiority of the West over the East also led Western scholars to think that they are more apt to understand the orientals than the orientals themselves, thus "orientalizing" them and subjecting them to Western standards which did not favor them.



- According to Edward Said researchers and men of administration took a very Eurocentric and therefore biased and selective approach to understanding the Orient and the orientals.
- All accounts of the Orient according to Said were prone to generalizations, attributing collective significance to acts of individuals.
- The West also used its own terminology to define and analyze the Orient, applying terms were unknown to their subjects. This is how concepts of the Orient were developed by Western eyes and for Western eyes.





- Thus according to Said Orientalism was fundamentally a system of self projection.
- The Orient served as a mirror for the West who wanted to see himself as superior.
- By describing the oriental as uncivilized the West attempt to proclaim its own civilization.
- The point of Said's Orientalism is that Western Knowledge of the East was never neutral since it was always involved with a political and cultural agenda.

