

Representation of the West: A Postcolonial Analysis of a South Asian Traveler's Account in *Images of the West – A Travelogue*

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Abstract

The paper is a postcolonial analysis of the representation focusing “Images of the West” by Munshi Itesamuddin (1827) whose era marks the advent of the British Colonialism in the subcontinent whereas he stands an eyewitness to the events that subverted the power-relations between the colonizers and the colonized. The travelogue aims at re-presenting the worldview of the Indians, especially Muslims, not only to the West but to the fellow citizens as well. Viewed in the context of the colonial times, it is a kind of Representation by a South Asian Muslim traveler whose perceptions entail a latent aversion of the West. Unlike his claims in the very text, Itesamuddin appears to have carried out representation of the West in his travelogue which is colored by the socio-political, cultural, religious and literary traditions of the South Asian society he came from. The primary focus of this study is to analyze the discursive practices which pre-existed Postcolonialism and were later replicated, adopted and adapted by the colonized to write back to the West. The term representation, its differing connotations, facets and multipronged interpretations have been explored and the above work has been analyzed in the light of all these aspects. Munshi Itesamuddin employs various techniques and methods such as stereotyping, labeling, erasure, objectification and metonymic ways of representation to carry out the portrayal of his Western Others. Unlike Orientalism however, there was no single narrative governing his interaction with the West which he considers as cultural, racial, political, social and religious Other of the East.

Keywords: *representation, Postcolonialism, Orientalism, stereotyping, Occidentalism*

Introduction, Background and Problem

Etymologically, the term ‘representation’ can be understood as a presentation drawn up not by depicting the object as it is but by re-presenting it in a new form and/or environment (Salazar, 2008). The politics of representation, its divisive nature and ensuing impacts in shaping up the power narratives have been primarily investigated, debated, analyzed, (re)presented and theorized by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). The Orientalists sought justifications for the expansion of their imperialistic projects and establishment of hegemonic designs through the representative narratives especially in the wake of East vs. West divide (Margaret, 2014). The accomplishment of “civilizing mission” (Fisher, 2007, p. 4) though self-proclaimed, added to the “White Man’s Burden” (Kipling, 1899, p. 1) and the orientalist resorted to myth-making on the basis of the binaries such as Orient/Occident and Us/Them. This led them to the conclusion that, “they

cannot represent themselves, they must be represented” (Marx quoted in Said, 1978, p. 268). So, the West assumed the responsibility to label the East or the Orient as it saw and perceived it not necessarily as it was or might have been. Resultantly, the objectives of “white patriarchal myths were to justify the conquest, occupation and destruction of non-western societies” (Ching & Low, 1996, p. 34) across the globe. The politicization of such scholastic literature in the field of Orientalism, despite Said’s forewarnings gave birth to its seemingly rival discipline called Occidentalism which is defined as “the dehumanized picture of the West painted by its enemies” (Buruma & Margalit, 2004, p. 5). A (counter-)narrative was established and the empire started writing back exploiting and executing many of the notions and practices used earlier for the dehumanization of the colonized or the subalterns. The investigation into this field reveals that in their literature, the colonized mainly resorted to nativism and representation as counter strategies; the former as a “private refuge” (Said, 1978, p. 275), and latter for defining their cultural others on the basis of certain preconceived notions, stereotypes, prejudices, and reduced images. Quite interestingly, the idea of the cultural Other was the brainchild of the West but in Occidentalism a new putative identity of the West as the *Cultural Other* of the East was formed. In this study, I have taken up the issue of representation from the perspective of the *colonized*. So, it is equally a form of *representation* (italic for emphasis) which aims at investigating this phenomenon from a different perspective. We go with the premise that such a practice in South Asia existed even before the ‘actual’ appropriation of the tools to subvert the colonizers’ powerful Western discourse of labeling and representation in the later part of the 20th century.

Literature Review

Said’s critique of a variety of discourses in different disciplines ranging from applied sciences to humanities led him to the conclusion that all these discourses had yielded themselves to Europe’s services and, on account of them, certain sweeping generalizations were made about particular cultures and societies: “the inscrutable Chinese, the untrustworthy Arab, the docile Hindu and so on” (Mills, 1997, p. 107). Sara Mills opines that the Western scholars had portrayed Orient as, “a repository of the western knowledge, rather than as a society and culture functioning on its own terms” (ibid.). She further adds that these representations were “structured largely according to certain discursive formats which developed over time, but which accrued truth – value to themselves through usage and familiarity” (Ibid). In fact each text about the Orient reinforced particular stereotypical images and ways of thinking. So much so that even religious narratives have been exploited to justify the colonial expansions as Frantz Fanon quotes Sir Alan Burns legitimizing stereotyping while referring to Bible in *Black Skin White Masks*:

It is laid down in the Bible that the separation of the white and black races will be continued in heaven as on earth, and those blacks who are admitted into the kingdom of Heaven

will find themselves separately lodged in certain of those many mansions of Our father that are mentioned in the New Testament. We are the chosen people – look at the colour of our skins. The others are black or yellow: That is because of their sins. (1952, p. 30)

It can be argued that the science of religion/Christianity ascribes the colours not to the congenital, climatic and geographic conditions but to the sins. The motive behind such stereotyping was to justify the ways of the colonizers to the colonized by undermining the Orient and dominating the Orientals even if it needs to be justified through *Bible*. It is through these practices that representative or stereotypical theories about the so-called half-humanness of the non-Europeans helped trigger the whole process of de-colonization and also established a counter-discipline termed as Occidentalism.

Occidentalism is often understood as a reaction to the Orientalist's construction of the distorted Orient. However, it was a practice long before that term was coined (Bonnett, 2004). For instance, perceptions of the West had developed in the Arab world in about 10th century when some Arab Writers textually managed their representative experiences about the people on the Northern Quadrant (Lewis, 2003). Then onwards, non-Western countries such as Egypt, Russia, Japan, China and India have been stereotyping especially the West, for at least a century before the idea of the West became the West's own key geo-political concept (Bonnett, 2004).

Occidentalism has been used characteristically as a political lever for non-Western countries to pursue wider national interests (Bonnett, 2004). Thus, while the West as a Positive Other has helped excoriate traditional norms and values or even re(form) socio-political milieu, the West as a Negative Other shunned Western values and safeguarded non-Western countries' cultural and political identities. According to N. Wang, Occidentalism plays a key role in supporting the movement against Western colonialism and cultural hegemony. He maintains that reinforcing the Western image as hegemonic helps non-Western countries to decolonize and defend national interests, promote and establish the narrative of nationalism to protect cultural integrity (1997). It appears that quite similar to discursive practices executed and manipulated by Orientalists, the non-westerns also posed the same threat to the Westerners. They have been marginalized and represented by the Occident in their discourse (s) and as Conceison argues, they are "to assert their national/cultural identities and claim their global position" (2004, p. 25). In this regard, the colonizer/colonized order was reversed and the tendency to dominate the Western Other became quite evident. Nonetheless, as compared to Orientalism the study and the critique of Occidentalism only takes a very small portion in lacking of "broader, deeper and critical attention" (Said, 1978, p. 41). Occidentalism, as a critique, deals with the discursive practices employed to construct the Western Other by the non-Westerners.

The main tool used for defining and labeling the Occident has been stereotyping which is defined by Michael Pickering as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category whose function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category” (2001, p. 10). Pickering is also of the view that such “images and notions are usually held to be simplistic, rigid and erroneous, based on discriminatory values and damaging to people’s social and personal identities” (Ibid.). Ehrlich. J. Howard endorses and widens the scope of stereotyping by adding that stereotyping refers generally to a “set of categorical beliefs or propositions about members of real or putative groups (2009, p. 171). Homi. K. Bhaba, relates it with politics and economy because white colonists defined the non-whites through “racist jokes, cinematic images, and other forms of representation” (as quoted in Huddart, 2006, p.38) in order to legitimize and justify it. All this resulted in the binary opposition which has already been referred to above.

Summing up the whole discussion, it appears that stereotyping and Occidentalism are intertwined and representation is not confined only to the colonizers or the conquerors; rather, the subjugated or the colonized have also been caricaturing and labeling their masters to prove their occupations as unjustified. It is, primarily, the former version that Said discussed in *Orientalism* and the latter viewpoint is the subject of the current article.

Research Questions

- What strategies of Re-representation are employed by Itesamuddin in his travelogue *Images of the West*?
- How does he portray himself enacting his identity?

Statement of the Problem

Munshi Itesamuddin, quite contrary to his claims in the text, carries out the representation of the colonizers/whites in his travelogue *Images of the West*. He considers the Colonizers as the binary opposites and employs various subversive strategies, labels and the stereotypical techniques to represent the West. The existence of such a representation of the West much before the formal establishment and recognition of the theory of Representation and Postcolonialism makes it not only noticeable but worthy of postcolonial analysis.

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This paper is a descriptive analytical research that primarily depicts the notions of representation and binaries to define, label and represent the Occident with special focus on Black/White, Colonized/Colonizer, Outsider/Insider and Self/Other dichotomies. “Images of the West”, is used as the main source of primary data and content analysis is conducted under the tenets of the postcolonial theory. Descriptions of actions and scenes, analyses of characters and language provide data for this study and are used to present the main argument. Along with Postcolonialism and representation (as a theoretical framework) we have also benefited from Close Reading which makes the job of analysis convenient through the analysis of only the relevant content, events and statements.

In this paper, postcolonial theory is adopted as a literary framework for the analysis of the primary text. According to Bhabha (1994:171), postcolonial criticism “bears witness to the unequal and universal forces of cultural representation...involved in a constant competition for political and economic control in the contemporary world”. Moreover, Bhabha (1994, p. 171) sees postcolonial critique emerging from colonial experiences. Postcolonial literary theory can be defined as a dialectical discourse which broadly marks the historical facts of sociocultural decolonization, national liberation and identity actualization. It allows people emerging from socio-political and economic domination to reclaim their sovereignty; it gives them a negotiating space for equity. The closely related theory is Occidentalism which is “the expression of a constitutive relationship between Western representations of cultural difference and worldwide Western dominance” (Coronil, 1996, p. 57). However, it does not represent the counterpart of post colonialism or Orientalism, but a discourse *from* and *about* the West that sets the stage for discourses about the West’s Other(s) – i.e., for Orientalism. Compared to colonialism, Occidentalism is the base upon which most of the colonizer/colonized differences were best articulated, as Mignolo (2000, p. 13) states:

If racism is the matrix that permeates every domain of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system, “Occidentalism” is the overarching metaphor around which colonial differences have been articulated and rearticulated through the changing hands in the history of capitalism . . . and the changing ideologies motivated by imperial conflicts.

Thus, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is analyzed via a close examination of *Images of the West* as a postcolonial text.

Analysis of Representation in *Images of the West*

1.1 Munshi Itesamuddin’s Narrative

The travelogue by Munshi Itesamuddin (1730-1800) was originally written in Persian but a translation into English by James Edward Alexander, titled “*Shigruf Namah-I-Vilaet or Excellent Intelligence Concerning Europe, Being the Travells of Mirza Itesamuddin*, was published in 1827” (Trivedi, 2003, p. 172). Munshi Itesamuddin wrote this travelogue when European travelogues about the East/ India abounded but the accounts of the Indians traveling to Europe were hardly available. He was one of the very few Indian travelers to Europe who wrote an account of his journey which marks the beginning of the history of relations between the East and the West. *Shigruf Namah* or *Images of the West* is “a vivid mixture of travel- writing, sociology, social history, and international politics” (Hasan, 2009, p. 14). Itesamuddin’s journey was a diplomatic mission as Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II had commissioned him as “an assistant to envoy Captain Archibald Swinton” (Fisher, 2007, p. 161). Mirza’s era was tumultuous because when he was born, the East India Company was one among several European trading houses; when he died they were the unchallenged rulers of the subcontinent. He was not a colonial subject because of Persian lineage and therefore his views

about the West and their colonial expeditions were set outside the rigors of colonial discourse. Itesamuddin's travelogue was written in 1784², but he had visited Europe about two decades ago.

Itesamuddin completes an exciting six-month sea voyage from India to England and his travel account began by charting the route that bound the *home* with the *destination*. The initial formation of the major boundaries and binaries of 'we' and 'they' can be seen vividly here, which becomes subjected to multiple reworking in the rest of the travelogue (*Italics for emphasis*). En route his journey is marked with the very wonders and mysteries that the West often attaches with the Orient. To him, the ship was a wonder and so was the sea with its daunting and ever expansive powers navigated by the colonizers for the expansion of their empires. Europe was a continent "beyond the moon" (Sen, 2005, p. 30), thus, far in geographical as well as psychological realms, bringing in the antiquity and ancientness in mind simultaneously. His rich offering of mysteries and wonders continues when he notices fire at St. Hellena (an island) that some people believed was due to the machinations of the apparitions or devils. As far as the other wonders are concerned, the narrator mentions the flying fish and the mermaid³ as well, nevertheless he is incredulous about the claim that Alexander the Great had fathomed the sea.

Itesamuddin's narrative is regarded as an earliest travelogue composed by any non-Westerner about their colonial masters. Itesamuddin was not only culturally but geographically bound as well. In the Islamic tradition of geographical division Europe falls in the last or the seventh Iqlim. Therefore, when he reaches Western hemisphere he writes that "this mass of land is an island although it is treated as the same as Firangistan. However, it is not included in the seventh Iqlim" (Sen, p. 56), thus far and out of the known world. It shows that visiting Europe meant entering into a geographical place that either ceased to exist in their knowledge base or it was primordial in time and space, far and away from civilizational intersections.

Itesamuddin's account is all combined with his endearing biases and prejudices manifested at different occasions in this narrative but interestingly, the West lauds the commentary and criticism by stating that "the free remarks of an intelligent foreigner on our laws, customs and manners must always be considered as an object of liberal curiosity" (Stewart, 1972, p. 7). In this travelogue, Mirza delineates the concept of Otherness thus perceiving the West through an Oriental gaze. Mirza's comments on the darker peoples encountered on the way "reveal his prejudice, as does his ecstatic celebration of European womanhood. The White Woman seems to embody the Platonic idea of beauty; she is a paradisiacal *houri*" (Edwards & Ziadeh, p. 319).

In his narrative, Itesamuddin questions the British hegemony which was conceived by Orientalists as undeterred and inevitable. He mentions his own contribution in the compilation of William Jones' Persian Grammar. It is

worth mentioning that the Orientalists who had always claimed to have known the Orient better than the Orientals themselves, were not able to know the language(s) of the Orient. Thus, the claims of the British Prime Minister that they know the Orient in a better way and therefore have the right to rule it (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 1999, p. 123) seem to have been put to a challenge that if one of the important languages was unknown to the West, how far was the claim veracious and unerring that their understanding of them was better than the natives themselves.

In his endeavors to perceive, assess and represent Europe he defined the West in both geographical as well as religious terms. The geographical location referred to the West in contrast to the East and the Occident in opposition to the Orient. The former was the land of the colonized known as the periphery inhabited by not-the-white-races, whereas the later was the land of the White races, inhabited by the colonizers and holding the center of the Empire which had managed the domination of the distant lands in the Orient in order to carry out its 'civilization mission'.

Itesamuddin's writings can be viewed as a preexisting counter-narrative to Western hegemonic grand and meta-discourses and as an important analysis of the rise of colonialism.

1.2 The Exotic Gaze and Eroticism

This dynamic of exotic gaze is consciously reversed by Itesamuddin who eroticizes the British females and also describes the manners he was eroticized by them. The English had never had a chance before to see a "Hindoostani man dressed in the manner as he was, and therefore looked at him with all curiosity" (Itesamuddin, p. 17). He also recognizes the exotic gaze which converts him into a spectacle thus, Itesamuddin himself is no less than a wonder to the West as the West is to him. It is remarked that "Europe he saw and Europe saw him too" (Trivedi, 2003, p. 177). Itesamuddin's exoticism does not disqualify him though, from becoming a popular and sexually attractive figure. The women of the host country would approach him and, while smiling, would express their desire by saying "Come, my dear, and kiss me" (Itesamuddin, p. 19)! These and such like invitations reflect that he "recorded what he took to be the very suggestive words and lustful behavior of market women on the street toward him" (Fisher, 162). He was highly appreciative of their forwardness and beauty especially in the beginning and would lament the absence of such milieu in his home country thereby cursing and holding the Indian Kotwal (policemen) responsible. When inquired about his prospects of getting married with an English woman, Itesamuddin presumes a failure owing to two reasons; the woman of the upper class won't have him and the woman of lower class would not be a suitable choice for him. Thus, he invokes a commonplace about poor prospects of his marriage. This quotidian response is followed by the remarks exhibiting classism and arrogance on the part of the visitor. While his high birth consciousness bars him from getting married to a lower class English woman, the religious component of the upper class English ladies would pose a grave challenge for them to convert and marry a foreigner. In this way, he

highlights the existing divisions between two cultures, streaming parallel but never appearing to merge or intersect for him. However, it is noteworthy that as soon as the conquest of India by the British is expedited, the British women ceased inviting the Indian colonized men for kissing and love-making or attenuating the prospects of conjugal relations. Moreover, the mutual gaze, earlier shared by the Orient and the Occident could not be kept up for long. "For, as every school boy knows, the Indians blinked and the rest was Orientalism and even worse, the Raj" (Trivedi, p. 177).

The Oriental eroticism is demonstrated when he encounters the women whose "beauty surpassed even fairies into covering their faces" (Itesamuddin, pp. 17-18). The use of hyperbolic expressions for the praise of the women's beauty is marked with typical Oriental traditional expressions whereby the women are excessively praised and their beauty is deemed to be mystical. Britain too is not only Orientalized but sexualized too, whilst being converted into an imaginative creation. His Orientalisation of the female body is reflected when he describes them as ravishers of hearts who are like peacocks in their gait and fairies in their beauty. They were so beautiful that the earth seemed converted into a paradise by their sheer presence.

Itesamuddin experiences a libidinous sexual terrain while he portrays London as replete with sexual possibilities exclaiming: "If there's heaven on the face of the earth/ It is here! It is here! It is here!" (Itesamuddin, p. 22). It is within this passage that a subversive attitude to sexuality is embedded and it complicates the Orientalist paradigm that perceived the Orient as sexually unrestrained. In Itesamuddin's narrative, the Oriental traveler is the subject who is threatened by sexual impropriety and Occident becomes the location of teeming sexuality, hence the roles of the Orientalist/Occidental paradigm are reversed. In his narrative, though occasionally, he makes explicit his understanding of how the Britons viewed him even as he himself observed them as "others". In this regard, Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi says that,

Seeing oneself being seen, that is, the consciousness of oneself as at once spectator and spectacle grounded all eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Orientals and Occidental *voy(ag)eurs'* narrative emplotment of alterity. The traveling spectators appeared to the natives as traveling spectacles; *voy(ag)eurs* seeking to discover exotic lands were looked upon by the locals as exotic aliens. (2001, pp. 1-2)

However, it must be noted that he himself refrained from deep engagements with the target community since he did not try to assimilate nor did he learn English. Itesamuddin consciously reverses Orientalist motifs of exotica and it is not imposed on him from some outside elements as was the case in Orientalist exotic canon. This narrative shows that he also engages in counter-hegemonic arguments and shows the Western society as a subject of Oriental wonder and fascination.

Apart from London and Oxford, Itesamuddin also visits Ireland and Scotland where boundaries were marked by the contemporary exigencies and history alike and he treats these two places as distinct and the people as two different races. This was in sharp contrast to the “Indo-Muslim sources of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which betray a profound ignorance of the world beyond the countries adjacent to India (Digby, 1989, p. 49). The representation also resulted out of the hatred developed amongst these diverse ethnicities. Consequently, the French represented the British and vice versa. Similarly, the Dutch were portrayed as a kinless nation which had no worth in the eyes of the then developed world.

1.3 Aristocratic architecture represented as plebeian structure

Itesamuddin’s travelogue clearly depicts Orientalists’ sensibility and the very title of the memoir itself conforms to an Orientalist paradigm as it highlights the idea of awe and wonder, both of which form crucial elements of the travelogue. His sea voyage is marked with the unusual experiences and he instantly remarks that “the ocean is full of wonders. If I chose to write of them all it would require a separate volume” (Itesamuddin, p. 13). When he lands on the shores of Britain he casts his quasi-anthropological gaze and notices their poverty, class divisions, marginalization of the oppressed and the lack of social mobility which is an anathema to him. The beauty and splendor that impresses him in the first glance, now leads him to notice the lack of diversity in the architecture and construction of the city. In addition, as “it is the whim of every traveler to find some similarity with his homeland when in a foreign territory” (Satapathy, p. 6), he invariably compares the metropolis with the periphery. Therefore, he says that on both sides of the city there are houses, three and five stories in height, which are uniform, “resembling the Calcutta barracks” (Itesamuddin, p. 22). This *uniformity* is in fact the *lack* (italics for emphasis) of variety that the metropolis holds and failing to offer anything extraordinary to the Oriental Immigrant. In addition, he describes the King’s palace with a hauteur common to many upper-class Indians of that time. To Itesamuddin, the palace is “neither magnificent nor beautiful: (ibid. pp. 21-22) and can be easily mistaken for the “houses of merchants” (ibid.) back in India. Though, as he concedes, the palace is elegant and beautiful from inside, yet, in a comically incongruous way, he calls the private quarters of George the 3rd as a harem where the suits of rooms and the buildings of the harem are painted of a “verdigris colour” (ibid.). These examples show that he uses his dispassionate tone to establish that the royal palace was neither a formidable structure from outside, nor was it an edifice; besides, its outer wall had not had even have a whitewash. It appeared to be a complex owned by a “rich man of Banaras” (Sen, p. 36). In this way, he reduces the magnificence of the royalty to a mere business man’s abode implying that he is not impressed even with the colonial structures of authority in the center. So, as the time passes by, he starts becoming reactionary, thereby rejecting the aspects of British culture and architecture by equating the British regality and Indian businessmen let alone the local ruling elites of the Indian sub-continent.

1.3 Debating the Theological Divide

Bernard Lewis is of the view that the Muslim visitors and explorers had always had a pervasive and hostile practice to call the Europeans as infidels and “Islam was the core of the identity of these visitors” (2003, p. 171). Itesamuddin, in his initial discussion, tries to display an inquisitive stance towards Anglican Christianity as he interprets the Christian parables with the help of Islamic conjunctions of his faith. At the same time, he insists on religious and cultural differences between Christianity and Islam but holds fast to his religio-spiritual beliefs and adheres to his Indo-Islamic identity in the face of what he perceives as the challenges of European modernity. Throughout his journey, there are two visible stages of his perception of Christianity; finding commonalities and intersecting points in the beginning and rejecting the Western belief system by the end of the journey.

Itesamuddin’s vitriolic and rhetorical attacks upon Orientalist assumptions of the West are carried out on the theological divide between his Eastern faith (Islam) and the faith of the Westerners (Christianity). Therefore, the assertion by some of the commentators that the Indian Muslim travelers, particularly the earliest ones, had never demonstrated any hostility towards Christianity, its belief systems, codes and practices (Hasan, pp. 20-22) is but too simple a statement. Hasan himself says that “this is not to suggest that they (the travelers) were free from prejudices and resentments or not repelled by the assumed superiority and cultural intolerance of the West” (Hasan, p. 21). This reinforces the assertion that the Indian travelers had engaged in the representative discourse and could never free themselves from such clichés. Itesamuddin’s assertion that “the original books of the New Testament have been lost to the world” (Itesamuddin, p. 48) implies that the articles of faith mentioned in the New Testament are removed from the original sources and thus, he is altogether skeptic about their genesis. The Whites have been marginalized in their discussion over the faith issues as it is only their questions that are quoted by the narrator and at no place in the narrative their responses are recorded. Rather, it is the narrator who plays the role of the protagonist in all the discussions ensuing from their questions. In his discussions he lumped together the belief systems of the French, English and the Hindus for their unreasonableness and inefficacy of the clergy system. The English, however, were seen as somewhat lacking in faith mainly because their primary religious practice was being confined to Sunday’s church going only.

Itesamuddin challenges the notions of Christianity as well as the civilizing mission of the West to convert, educate and uplift what they considered as downtrodden masses. Itesamuddin regards his own religious codes, belief systems and values as over and above any suspicions. It is because of his “unswerving loyalty to his own faith” (Hasan, 31) that leads him to resist all the blandishments offered by Captain S. His conviction is insurmountable as he manifests his abstinence from wine, pork and such other prohibited items and activities. The feud over Itesamuddin’s dietary preferences, according to his religious tenets, finally parted their ways. As

Fisher says, he also experienced “anguish on a more personal level as he struggled on the daily basis to fulfill his religious duties, particularly in obtaining halal food” (Fisher,162). Captain S. once frustrated frowns saying “You Musselmanns are possessed with an idea that we are gross feeders” (Itesamuddin, 84), to which Itesamuddin replies, “. . . Between your manners and customs and ours there is the distance of the West and the East” (ibid). In saying so, Itesamuddin refers to the divide between East and West that the traditional Orientalism propounded and practiced. He feels repulsive over the very idea that unlike Muslims, the Whites/Non-Muslims consume meat which is neither Halal⁴ (permitted) nor is it slaughtered by offering a prayer. The Halal is not just food; it is self-respect, dignity, identity” (Trivedi, p. 176). The Oriental figure shuns Orientalists’ discursive practices and rather reverses them to be applied on them who should learn from what they consider as backward, degenerate, marginalized, illogical, irrational and uncivilized (Said, 1994). The Oriental figure considers West at its infancy and as Others whose episteme is different than that of the East or Orient. It is on the basis of his faith that the religious taxonomies are reversed and the presumptuous superiority of the West is annihilated.

The debate between Captain Swinton and Itesamuddin becomes central in the last section of the travelogue where the latter challenges the epistemological and ontological constructions of the West. The dynamics of faith, its relation with life, the prophets and their role in religion, the growth of civilization and the impact of faith in the development of the society and civilization are discussed in great length. Some derision was directed at his “Islamic beliefs, even by Swinton” (Itesamuddin, 162). He refuses to be defined by the Christian episteme and traditions and rather, makes Christianity the focus of investigation. He makes it clear to the Captain that not only in the matters of religion, faith and wisdom but also in the matters of the world Muslims have a far superior and practical approach to life as compared to the other faiths and he cherishes the thought of overall respect that religion and religious practices enjoyed during the Mughal Era. Itesamuddin, quite lucidly, compares and analyzes the religious doctrine of the West and deconstructs and displaces it from the place of universal theological doctrine.

In the concluding chapter of *Images of the West* Itesamuddin and Captain Swinton develop differences; the former refuses to accompany the later on his further trips. His refusal is mainly on the premise that his religious limitations and sensitivities were likely to be violated. The debates with the representative(s) of the West and Itesamuddin’s challenges to their articles of faith clearly demonstrate the refusal of the immigrant to assimilate into the culture of the Other. At the end, he decides to bring an end to his journey and rushes back home⁵ claiming no interest in acquiring and stashing riches or temporal advantages. To him, the spiritual quest is far superior to the material wealth and Europe is far inferior to India in this regard. Therefore, in order to sustain his identity as an Indian Muslim he

leashes out stereotypical notions about the West to belittle and debase her, proving his own choices of faith and homeland unmatched.

Conclusion

The discussion on Orientalism and Occidentalism reveals that both coexisted albeit in the particular context of Muslims especially from the Orient, the former preceded the later. Through his travelogue, Munshi Itesamuddin re-perceives, redefines and represents the Europe, especially the British Whites through the Indian lens. His perceptions about the West are not merely a euphoric expression of a visitor's charm but he delved deep into the society, tried to learn and unlearn many cultural components and produced the narratives ending up with his perceived socio-cultural and religious superiority over the Western society. Furthermore, after Orientalism, Said's assertion about the likelihood of an asymmetrical discipline like Occidentalism reinforces the idea that as a discipline, Occidentalism pre-existed Orientalism.

Munshi Itesamuddin employs various techniques of representation such as stereotyping, labeling, objectification, erasure and metonymic ways of representation. For example, he excludes the West as an insignificant place in the world that doesn't even exist in the eastern consciousness. He objectifies the Western women as celestial objects of pleasure. To him, the West is a binary of the East whereas all the whites are images opposite to the brown figures of the East. Unlike the West, that stereotyped the East as one, he is able to distinguish the Scots from the Irish and the British from the Welsh. On the other hand, he lumps the British and the French Whites as alike. He finds more monotony in the geography and the architecture of Europe than that of his homeland, India whereas the latter to him is much more diverse. He even demeans the British King's Palace to be a simple building unlike the grandeur of Indian Kings' palaces. Sticking to his Islamic identity, he sees all the European as white infidels. He is very skeptical about Europeans' Christian faith which, to him, is faulty, unoriginal and lacking genuineness. He even stereotypes all the non-Muslim infidels as one type while he elevates his own faith, religion, dietary habits, cast, color, creed above all Europeans. In this respect, his writing augers the dawn of an era of counter narratives nevertheless after more than a century of his death.

His initial response to the intersections between Islam and Christianity undergoes a huge transfiguration when he rejects the Western pursuit of material culture and remains devout and unwavering follower of spiritual traditions of his own religion. Even his very decision of returning from England marks his conviction that his own homeland is far superior in terms that he deems appropriate. To him, the ultimate aim is not to amass wealth and pursue the worldly treasures but to lead an upright life obeying the laws of Allah and His Prophet. This spiritual credo is manifested through all his actions, debates and pronouncements. The myth of Europe was demystified by the colonized, periphery-dwelling traveler through his perceptions, judgments and the truths outweighing his rest of the claims.

End Notes

1. Captain Swinton is abbreviated as Captain 'S' in the travelogue because Itesamuddin did not want to reveal the identity of the Captain for fear of hurting the sensibilities of his family.
2. On his return from Europe, Munshi Itesamuddin was hailed as a local celebrity and was renamed as 'Vilayet Munshi', whereby, Vilayet is an Indian word for Europe especially England.
3. Mermaid is a mythological creature and it is said to have the upper body as that of a beautiful woman having a mouth like flower, big dark eyes and eyebrows like a bow, and lower body as that of fish with a forked tail.
4. The Muslims are instructed to slaughter the animals and birds by reciting the prayer "Allah is great, Allah is great". Only then, the meat becomes permitted or halal.
5. He could have acquired immense wealth given his proficiency in Persian but he "spurned Captain S's blandishments" (Hasan: *ibid*), and returned in 1979 to India.

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