Suablatern Studies' Critique of Orientalism

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Introduction

This essay attempts to examine the critique of Orientalism[1] in India by Subaltern Studies Group. It explains how Orientalist discourse was constructed and constituted as imperial knowledge in South Asian context. In order to understand the critique of Orientalism by the subaltern studies' scholars, it is imperative to locate their epistemological stance towards Orientalism within the broader debate of modernity and postmodernity. Following the postmodernist espousal of plurality of truth, a subaltern study announces the end of singular truth presented by knowledge and endorsed by power. The critical engagement of scholars of subaltern studies with universalistic and Eurocentric views of knowledge takes place mainly in the domain of history because mostly history is viewed as a vehicle to express the hegemonic ideas of Europe.

In this essay an attempt is made to examine the Subaltern critique of Orientalism to show how subaltern studies' scholars reject European claims of universality, and dislodge European history and historical categories from the centre of the practice of History[2]. It choses two eminent personalities of European thought – Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx - to illustrate that both of them, despite their apparent opposition to each other, share the same historicist and deterministic view of history underpinned by teleology.

Orientalist scholars studied the Orient in such an intellectual ambience. Therefore, it is imperative to problematize their ideological and epistemological moorings in Europe to unravel the hidden ideological bias and epistemic violence in its scholarship especially in the field of history. Subaltern studies' historiography is an investigation of ideological, cultural and epistemological basis of Orientalism to emancipate not only the identity of subaltern groups, but also meaning trapped in the universalistic and historicist view of history, and clarify misunderstood categories of social science. This essay strives to explicate how the translation of cultural practices into the categories of social science produces pseudo knowledge and categories, and result in the extinction of different subaltern groups as well as misunderstanding of Hindu cultural practices for Hindu "religion".

The essay employs Michel Foucault's idea of discourse to analyse Orientalism in India. My discourse analysis does not raise question about the feasibility of the notion of 'discourse' as a tool in investigating the scholarship of Orientalism. It uses

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[1] I am using Orientalism/Orientalist and colonial knowledge/colonialist interchangeably.
[2] My use of the term history includes social sciences and humanities except where the discussion is specifically about history as a field of study. While discussing the idea of history in Hegel and Marx, I used it as a field of study.

it to dislodge the centrality of assumptions and epistemic axioms in the domain of knowledge to clear the ground for more suppressed and peripheral forms of knowledges to emerge in the domain of knowledge. It views the production of knowledge about India by Orientalist in the light of power/knowledge relation, and unpacking the structures of episteme[3] operating in the process of knowledge production. It helps to unearth the hidden textual and cultural biases that colour the view of Orientalists who viewed and wrote about the enchanted land of India. The paper argues that the same view also forms the contours of Indian nationalism and historiography, which represented the voice of the elite only. Finally, the essay locates subaltern studies scholarship within the emerging trend at global level named cosmopolitan citizens who live in diasporas, but critically engaged with their past and attempt to rescue it from the clutches of Orientalists and elite historiography whose dominance was made possible by dominance at epistemic level and subsequently material domains.

Said's "Orientalism": Laying Bare Power in Knowledge

The publication of "Orientalism" by Edward W. Said has far reaching effects on different academic fields of humanities and social sciences in many ways. His book is a critique of the academic filed of Oriental studies, which has been a scholarly pursuit at most of the prestigious European universities for several centuries. Oriental studies is not a discipline like philosophy, history, anthropology or psychology; rather it is a composite area of scholarship that employs methodologies and tools, provided by academic disciplines such as philology, linguistics, ethnography, literature, history and the interpretation of culture through the discovery, recovery, compilation, and translation of oriental texts.

'Orientalists' were the scholars who translated the writings of the Orient into English and French, based on the assumption that a truly effective colonial conquest required knowledge of the conquered peoples. Thus, we can say that by knowing the Orient, West came to own it. It gave birth to binaries. The Orient became the studied, the seen, the observed, and the object. Orientalist scholars were the students, the seers, the observers, and the subject. The Orient was passive; the West was active. Although Orientalism purports to be an objective, disinterested, and rather esoteric field, in fact it functioned to serve political ends. Orientalist scholarship provided the means through which Europeans could take over Oriental lands.

Edward Said is quite clear about the causal sequence between Orientalism and colonialism: Colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact. He claims that no more glaring parallel exists between power and knowledge in the modern history of philology than in the case of Orientalism. To

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[3] Michel Foucault defines episteme as "The 'apparatus' which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterised as scientific." Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*, Brighton: Harvester, 1980. *p. 197.*

Said, Orientalism is a Western bias and evil scheme to dominate, restructure and establish authority over the East by giving a certain relationship to knowledge and power. 'In short' he writes 'Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.[4] The works of a famous French philosopher and historian of ideas Michel Foucault inspires Edward Said's critique of Orientalism. His works especially '*The Archaeology of Knowledge*' and *Discipline and Punish'* played a seminal role in conceptualising the thesis of Orientalism. Said employs Foucauldian notion of the discourse to illustrate how the discourse of 'the Orient', a set of binary representations of the East produced by Western historians, philosophers and other scholars, enabled colonial powers to exercise power over foreign lands and justify policies of imperialism.

Foucauldian Discourse: Regime of Truth

Michel Foucault does not use the word discourse in its traditional sense; he gave novel meaning to it. The idea of discourse proved to be an immensely rich concept for research in social sciences and humanities. Foucault's notion of discourse is consonant with his argument that academic disciplines do not simply produce knowledge but also generate power. His analysis shows how apparently the objective ways of organizing knowledge served particular power relationships and the ruling interests of society. A discourse can be described as a system of statements within which the world can be known. Within a discourse, the language, culture, institutions, and political ambience of the represeter taint all representations.[5] In his oeuvre he shows how a discourse mutates with the change of power relations within a particular time of history. In his books *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Foucault provides penetrating insights by showing how the mutation within a discourse occurs. After elaborating his conceptual framework, he in his later works selects concrete examples from the fields of medicine[6], psychiatry[7] and jail[8] to illustrate how knowledge functions as a social power.

The scholarship about the Orient was produced within the framework of the discourse of Orientalism. Orientalist scholarship mutated with the mutation of its discourse. Hence, there can be no "truths", only formations or deformations. In other words Orientalist scholarship is a distorted form of knowledge about the East. Edward Said's criticism of Orientalism generated a heated debate about the legitimacy of the claim of knowledge to truth, and brought forth problems of representation in human sciences. It has also given birth to numerous responses and critiques attempting to redress the historical under-representation of minority and marginalized viewpoints in comparative studies. Said's thesis of Orientalism is a

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[4] Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994. p 3.
[5] Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*, Brighton: Harvester, 1980. p 131.
[6] Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception;* USA: Random, 1990; UK: Routledge, 1990.
[7] Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, London. Routledge, 2001.
[8] Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punishment. The Birth of the Prison*, London. Penguin Books, 1991.

starting point for post-colonial cultural theory which challenges the colonial and nationalist history. The significance of Edward Said's Orientalism lies in the fact that it points toward a hitherto ignored area of colonialism. That is the involvement of epistemic violence in colonialism.

Subaltern Studies Collective was established in 1979-80s under the intellectual guidance of Ranajit Guha, and elaborated by historians such as Shahid Amin, David Arnold, Gyan Pandey, David Hardiman, Sudipta Kaviraj, Partha Chatterjee, Rosaliind O'Hanlon and Vinayak Chaturvedi. The Subaltern Studies Group is the first major school of thought in history that developed outside the West. It derived its inspiration from Said's works and post-colonial studies. Said's Orientalism provided the subaltern historians with an approach which dispensed with the need to be subservient to orientalists or historians writing about other societies and a conceptual framework which could be indigenized.[9] It attempts to investigate the epistemic as well as physical violence of colonization in India.

Gramscian 'Subaltern': Appropriation and Extension of Meaning

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, in his magnum opus 'Notes from Prison Book', adopted the word subaltern to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern studies appropriated the word subaltern in Gramscian sense. Subaltern classes include peasants, workers and other groups were denied access to hegemonic power. 'Their history' asserts Gramsci 'therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States.'[10] Subaltern classes are not unified and do not have state. Therefore, they do have history of their own. They remained underrepresented, as the history is a history of the state and dominant groups. The Subaltern historians apply the Gramscian insights into the problem of representation of the subaltern groups in the history to Indian context.

The Subaltern historians, however, do not embrace Gramscian ideas in its entirety. The group argues that though the elite in India had dominance over subaltern groups, they did not have hegemony over these groups. Absence of hegemony provided a space for subaltern groups to affect local event through their agency and will, albeit elite's domination. Orientalist and nationalist historiographies left out subalterns whose traditional structure or domain of subaltern remained intact during the colonial period. They relied on local structures for political mobilization. Guha, founding father of Subaltern Studies, treats it as an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor was its existence depended on the latter.[11]

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9 Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan. "The Making of the Working Class: E. P. Thompson and Indian History", History Workshop Journal, 43, Spring 1997, pp. 177-196; and Sumit Sarkar's Orientalism Revisited: Saidian Frameworks in the Writing of Modern Indian History in Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial, ed. Vinayak Chaturvedi, London and New York: Verso, 2000.

10 Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from the Prison Notebooks, London: Lawrance and Wishart, 2003. p 32.

11 Guha, Ranajit. Guha, Ranajit. *" On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India"* in *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Oxford University Press,

Rejection of Orientalist/Colonialist and Elitist History

The Subaltern Studies is viewed as a collective enterprise, that represents the most significant achievement of South Asian 'cultural studies'. It has effectively contested what were until recently the dominant interpretations of Indian history, and more generally it has provided a framework within which to contest the dominant modes of knowledge. Where previously the history of modern South Asia, and particularly of the national movement, was fixed as a history of elites, now the subaltern history is being construed primarily as a history of 'subaltern groups'.

The Subaltern studies inaugurate its programme with the words, 'The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois – nationalist elitism'.[12] Its purpose is to redress the imbalance created in academic work by a tendency to focus on elites and elite culture in South Asian historiography. Subaltern historians see the dominance of elitism in Indian historiography as a consequence of British colonialism and complicity of nationalist elite with colonialism. They applied Said's thesis of Orientalism in Indian context. Orientalism is accused of creating 'Other' on the pretext 'they'. Similarly the civilized men, engaged with Orientalism, took charge of representing the 'Other/Orient' on the pretext that the 'others' were unable to represent themselves. This attitude has also pervaded the domain of human sciences, which became a cog in the maintenance of colonial machinery. Orientalism appropriates different disciplines in its study of the East.

Problematizing Orientalist history

Although Subaltern studies brought all disciplines of social science and humanities employed in the service of Orientalism under its critical examination, it is mostly the terrain of history where Subaltern intellectuals fought their epistemological war with Orientalism. The reason for singling out history to problematize the Orientalist scholarship is that history as a discipline was after all an instrument of the post-Enlightenment regime of reason, and the Indian nationalist historians, being Western-educated elites, were its eager proponents. The enlightenment view of rationality and progress are enshrined in colonial and nationalist historiography.[13] Subaltern historians' research lay bares the epistemological deficiencies in human sciences. It is from the epistemological deficiencies of human sciences, the problem of representation emanates. In the post-Enlightenment period Europe got military as well as epistemological ascendancy over foreign societies. The political pre-

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1982. p 4. For his definition of the terms, 'elite', 'people', 'subaltern', etc in Indian context see his note on definition of the terms on p 8.

[12] Guha, Ranajit. " On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" in *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982. p 1.

[13] Prakash, Gyan. "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography" in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed. *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, London and New York: Verso, 2000. p 171. Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: a Derivative Discourse*, London: Zed Books, 1993. pp 10-17

eminence of the Western world is facilitated by the emergence of universalistic ideas of history in Western intellectual history.

Working within the ambience of universalistic ideas of history and Western dominance of knowledge, philosophers and social scientists produced theories embracing the entirety of humanity. Domination of Europe at epistemological level preceded the military conquest of other societies. European colonialists presented themselves as emissaries entrusted with a duty to introduce the dark continent of Africa and the lazy Orient with the light of Enlightenment. The physical effects of colonialism attracted the cognizance of the most of historians. However, effects of epistemic violence of colonial/Oriental knowledge went unnoticed.

Rejecting the Orientalist and nationalist historiography as a mouthpiece of the power, the subaltern historians study both physical and epistemic violence on subaltern groups. By doing so, they also reject the universalistic assumptions of history incorporated in history and human sciences. These assumptions are enshrined in Orientalism that functioned as corporate authority of knowledge about India.[14] To trace the source of physical violence, it is sine qua none for the subaltern scholars to show the cultural context of the formation of knowledge of social science in the West. 'As we know' claims Chakrabarty 'these statements have been produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of humankind- that is, those living in non-Western cultures. This in itself is not paradoxical, for the more self-conscious of European philosophers have always sought theoretically to justify this stance'.[15] The subaltern scholars are of the opinion that the everyday paradox of third-world social science is that these societies find these theories, in spite their inherent ignorance of third world societies, eminently useful in understanding these societies. Finally, they question, 'what allowed the modern European sages to develop such clairvoyance with regard to societies of which they were empirically ignorant? Why cannot we, once again, return the gaze?'[16]

Universal History versus History of Fragments

G.W.F. Hegel is one of the illustrious figures in European thought who developed such clairvoyance about the backwardness of the East and the realization of world history in the Western progress. His teleological view of history rejuvenated historicism, and gave birth to stagiest view of history. He sees universal history as the way in which spirit manifest itself in the world. According to Hegel's reckoning 'Europe is absolutely the end of history, Asia the beginning.'[17] History, for Hegel, is the story of the development of consciousness of freedom in the world – the

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[14] Ludden, David. "Orientalism Empiricism" *in Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993. pp 257-263

[15] Chakrabarty, Dipesh in "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History' in *A Subaltern Studies Reader: 1986 – 1995*, ed. Ranajit Guha. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. p 265.

[16] Chakrabarty, Dipesh in "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History' in *A Subaltern Studies Reader: 1986 – 1995*, ed. Ranajit Guha. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. p 265.

[17] Hegel, G.W.F. *Philosophy of History*, London: Dover, 1956. p 107.

development of the human spirit in time through the growth of its own self-consciousness. With the realization of self-consciousness and freedom in the shape of modern state in Europe, universal spirit manifested and reached its goal. Any society without state has no history. By doing so Hegel's theory consigns the East to subordinate position to that of the Western history. For the Orientals, the only way to progress is the emulation of the West.

In spite of all his admiration for India, Hegel does not include India in the world-history because social distinction instead of developing 'petrified into natural determinations –i.e. the caste system'.[18] Historicist notions of history, like Hegel's, substantiated colonialist claims of being emissaries endeavouring to bring the light of civilization to the societies of East engulfed by dark forces of irrationality, tyranny and barbarity. Among the emissaries of civilization, Orientalists occupy the central position. Since 'Orientalism is based on an epistemology which is essentialist, empiricist and historicist'[19], it naturally shares colonialist project of the Enlightenment by becoming authority of representing the Orient to Western audience. On the other side, Hegel's theory of world history suppresses subaltern voices in favour of great personalities in history and grand narratives of world history itself.[20] Following Hegel's historicist and elitist concept of history, Orientalists suppressed the subaltern voice by concentrating on the culture of elite and focusing on 'the literary outpourings of the ruling institutions – the *ulema*, *seraey*, and the royal bureaucracy'[21]

While Karl Marx claims to have corrected Hegel's dialectic, he himself ends up adopting the Orientalist view towards the East. Marx's approach towards the East and particularly India stems from his historicist and teleological view of history where he sees history as a linear progression culminating in proletarian revolution via different stages.[22] Like Hegel, concepts of spirit, teleology and history are at the core of Marx.[23] This approach led Marx and Friedrich Engels to depreciate Asian Mode of Production as stagnant. Both of them favoured colonialism in different regions of the East because they deemed that capitalism tends to destroy pre-

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[18] For a detail analysis of the exclusion of India from world-history by Hegel see Guha, Ranajit. *History at the Limit of World-History,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

[19] Turner, Bryan S. *Marx and the End of Orientalism*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978. p 7.

[20] Hegel, G.W.F. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, *1982.* p 141.

[21] Turner, Bryan S. *Marx and the End of Orientalism*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978. p 6.

[22] For Marx's views on India see Prakash, Gyan. "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed. *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial,* London and New York: Verso, 2000. pp 175-186; Chatterjee, Partha. "Peasant, Politics and Historiography: A Response," *Social Scientist* 120 vol. 11, no. 5 (May 1983) pp. 58-65; King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic East'*, London: Routledge, 1999. pp 193-6; For general critique of Marx's idea of capital see Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference,* Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000. pp 47-71.

[23] Turner, Bryan S. *Marx and the End of Orientalism*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978. p 26. This monograph provides insights into the inherent teleology of Marx and his orientalism of the Eastern lands especially the Middle East.

capitalist society. In order to make the Orient to get rid of stagnation, its institutions and social formations had to be destroyed. The destruction of pre-capitalist structures pave the way for the emergence of working class that will ultimately bring about socialist revolution.[24] Marx's analysis of transition from feudalism to capitalism is based on economic determinism which presupposes a priori destruction meted out to traditional societies by capitalism. Thus, both Marx and Engels appear partners of colonialism by providing justification for historical inevitability to imperialism in the development of capital. Despite all their ingenuity of sociological tools and theories, both Marx and Engels could not help avoiding historicist approach and became unwilling partners of imperialism.

Indian particularism nullifies universal ideas of Marx's as well as capitalism. Local movements such as Naxalites and Santals[25] revolt, and workers of jute mills of Calcutta[26] highlights the fact that these phenomena can be better understood in their material and cultural context not through universalistic categories of Marxism and socialism. In Indian context, the traditional categories, created by orientalists, and nomenclature of social scientists failed to delineate the real picture of local events within their cultural setting and provide emancipatory progress to every level of traditional hierarchy of Indian culture. The Subaltern critique of Marx's stagnationist account of India via the Marxist quest after an Indian feudalism gives way to the critique of perceived Eurocentric categories of both Asiatic and feudal modes in an attempt to develop categories and typologies appropriate for analysing pre-colonial India.

Subaltern Studies Project: Emancipating the Entrapped Meaning

As mentioned earlier that the Orientalists were among the sages of the West who had authority over the knowledge of the Orient. These authorities arrested different histories, cultures and identities by essentialising and homogenizing heterogeneous societies under the rubric of the Orient. The Subaltern Studies Collective is an emancipatory project to emancipate meaning, entity and cultural practices of subaltern groups. It is an effort to free, to borrow a phrase of Gyan Prakash, 'meaning trapped by beliefs in essences'.[27]

The entrapment of meaning by belief in essences is facilitated by the concept of world history in the West. It was instrumental in the material as well as intellectual aspect of empire building. Orientalism was in complicity with imperialism in this project. According to Ranajit Guha, Orientalists' attempt of fusing Hindu mythology with world-history 'was modernist not in methodology alone but in concept as

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[24] Karl, Marx. *Capital*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970. p 716

[25] Guha, Ranajit, ed. Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. p 46-47

[26] Chakarabarty, Dipesh. *Rethinking Working Class History*: Bengal, 1890-1940. New Jersey. Princeton University Press. 2000.

[27] Prakash, Gyan. "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography in Chaturvedi, Vinayak (ed). *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial,* London and New York: Verso, 2000. p 186.

well.'[28] The subaltern studies treats history as a discourse employed by the corporate institution of Orientalism. The European history has dominance in the world history. The dovetail of both historicism and dominance of European methodology has injected the idea of modernity into Indian intelligentsia. As a corollary historicist approach became ingrained among Europeans. Being subordinate to the European history, Indians also internalised this ideology. Since Europe is the epigone of progress, it is the duty of Indians is to emulate and imitate the modernity which took a leap ahead in time. That is why V. S Naipaul called this attitude as "playing the ape"[29] that is - the natives cannot invent something new; they are capable only of mimicking the west, which forever keeps them in check and represented them on the canvas of Indian history painted by the Orientalists. Modernity for subaltern studies, as well as Said, is nothing but a shallow pretence with its local games and pastiches. Orientalists' knowledge succeeded to usher India from myth to history by collapsing the past and placing history in simultaneity of now. Indian nationalist elite also endorsed the historicist view of development and progress. Indian ruling elites do not realize that in world history European history has dominance. Dipesh Chakrabarty thinks that 'Indian history itself is in a position to subalternity'. Indian history's subalternity is a result of both Orientalist and nationalist historiography. The former relegated the Indian history into subalternity, and the later accepted the essentialist character and homogeneity of India to embark upon the unfinished project of colonial modernity. This project is incomplete. Therefore, it is the duty of elite to modernize the nation by bringing it at par with Western nations. Indian nationalist historiography emulated the West and imbibed its ideological biases inherent in it.

Nationalist Historiography: A Variant of Orientalism

The subaltern scholars deem nationalist historiography of India as nothing but continuation of old scholarship of Orientalism in the garb of nationalist elite who failed to bring nation to its own. Orientalists' themes and appellations such as "failure," "lack," "inadequacy," "unhygienic," etc. reveals its hidden biases. Failure, absence etc. indicates typical Orientalist figure of the lazy natives of the East. Orientalism's basic proceedings of knowledge remained remarkably stable despite changes over time. In spite of its anti-colonial stance, nationalist historiography of India still works within the paradigm that shaped the contours of colonial knowledge and mind-set. At foundational level, both nationalists and Orientalists are the same but façade looks dissimilar. Thus, we can infer that the nationalist elite neither challenge the epistemic foundation and its imperialism, nor realized the function of the technologies of power in the production of knowledge. Seen in this way, the struggle of nationalist elites imperialism appears to be a struggle to change the façade not foundations, because the *raison d´être* of nationalist elite and nationalist historiography is based on the foundations provided by Orientalists. Thereby, the subaltern studies term the anti-colonial struggle as failure because nation failed to get rid of the colonial structure, which was constructed for

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[28] Guha, Ranajit. *History at the Limit of World-History,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. p 5.
[29] Naipal, V.S. *India: A Wounded Civilization,* New York: Vintage, 1978. p 133.

facilitating colonial rule. The end of colonialism is not more than a change of colonial rule with comprador class or elite, who exchanged roles with the white colonial class without engaging in any radical restructuring of society. Fanon asserts that the black skin of nationalist elite was 'masked' by their complicity with the values of the white colonial powers.[30]

The elite historiography subscribes to the essentialist posture of Orientalists towards India, and depicted homogenous picture of India at the expense of subaltern groups, cultures, histories, and races. Taking conceptual cue from Orientalists, Indian elite also captured meaning in homogenous nationalism. The politics of representation in Orientalist discourse is based on clearly delineated identities. It forced heterogeneous and non-delineated groups to align with delineated group. In this process, various groups either lost their particular identity or coerced by epistemic force to surrender their particularities to a group which is underpinned by taxonomy and labels manufactured through instrument like mapping, census and categorising to increase the sway of colonial power over uncharted groups. Furthermore, there were still groups who did not come under the sanctioned categories of Orientalism. This space can be called a place not inhibited by social science or a locus that exists outside the purview of Orientalists. The subaltern historians attempt to study these groups in their own terms. All of the research in this field is not done by the subaltern studies, it, nonetheless, ushered researches into new spaces which were buried owing to the devastation inflicted on 'threshold' communities by the epistemic violence of the Orientalist. Coupled with this, the Orientalists' outlook aggrandized colonial power that was in need of collective categories so that it can device instruments to rule woods (collectives) without going into details of trees (the subaltern groups).

Orientalism: Fitting Larger Parts in Smaller Wholes

As a part of European academic culture Orientalism to some extent influenced by the holistic approach within social science. Holism claims that the wholes are bigger than its total sum of parts. Sociologically speaking, societies have properties as wholes that cannot be deduced from the characteristics of individuals. Therefore, social analysis should start at large-scale institutions and their relationships, not at the behaviour of individual actors in society. On the other hand, methodological individualists assert that 'the ultimate constituents of the social world are individual people.'[31]

Holists' argument in favour of whole is cogent. Nevertheless, a close examination of Indian society in juxtaposition with essentialist and monolithic view of the Orientalists about India compels us reconsider holists' thesis that the wholes are bigger than its parts. In Indian case, the situation is almost inverse, for in India parts

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[30] See Fanon, Franz. *Black Skin: White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann, London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968. In this book Fanon states that failure of changing national consciousness into social consciousness would be merely an extension of imperialism not national liberation.

[31] Watkins, J. W. N. *"Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences"* in Mcintyre, Lee C and Martin, Michael, ed. Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science. London: The MIT Press, 2000. p 442

of the whole appears to be more than the whole, which is represented as homogenous India by Orientalism. One can still argue that there are some subaltern groups who have not been mapped out and others are incorporated into broader categories. This is precisely the argument which came under attack by subaltern studies. If a group or community has not covered by the established disciplines of knowledge, it does not mean that it does not exist with all its particularities on the face of the earth. Subaltern historians refuse the Orientalist and elitist historiography which focuses on the whole, such as Indian nation. They prefer fragment to the whole. That is why most of their research is about fragmented groups. The subaltern studies accept the existence of the state because we inhibit societies 'structured by the state'. The concept of fragment is utilised to challenge both whole and fragments. Fragmented history is conceptualized. It rejects wholes called the state, and subaltern forms of knowledge are suggestive of knowledge forms that are not tied to the will that produces the state.

By rejecting holistic approach of the Orientalism and nationalist history, Subaltern historiography attempts to recover the voices of subaltern groups who lost their voice under the burden of fixed and collective identities. Dipesh Chakrabarty is of view that, 'Just as the British sought to give India a standardized legal system, they also attempted to fix and officialise collective identities (such as caste and religion) in the very process of creating a quasi-modern public sphere in India.'[32] In the same vein he also repudiates nationalist historiography on the basis that the nationalists preserved those institutions and identities instituted by the British. This does not mean that the subaltern historians refuse the existence of caste system and broad communities. What they reject is the clear delineation of communities as fixed and impermeable. Sudipta Kaviraj summarizes the difference between pre-colonial and colonial categories in his observation where he claims, 'in pre-British India, communities had "fuzzy" boundaries; in British India, they became "enumerated".[33]

Orientalism in India: Knowledge of Power and Power of Knowledge
The discussion in preceding paragraphs takes us into the heart of Michel Foucault's thesis of knowledge/power relationship. In conjunction with official reports, detailed surveys, parliamentary inquiries, census, taxation by colonial administration, Orientalists research of Indian culture, languages, history, religion and society was regularized and professionalized in the late nineteenth century through linguistic, ethnological, archaeological, and census surveys and the district gazetteers emerged. All these fields of knowledge are associated with the modern ideas and technologies of governmentality to make the bodies docile by controlling the soul. Gyan Prakash opines that, 'the enormous growth, change and the

[32] Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002. p 83.
[33] Kaviraj, Sudipta. On the Construction of Colonial Power: Structure, Discourse, Hegemony" quoted by Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002. p 5.
Kaviaraj, Sudipta. "The Imaginary Institution of India" in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, ed. *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on Indian History and Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. pp 12-14.

increasing complexity of Orientalist knowledge was of crucial importance; for, committed as British rule was to a government based on accurate knowledge of facts, changes in knowledge had direct implications for the technologies of rule'.[34]

Expansion of European empires, especially the British Empire, in late eighteen and during the whole period of the nineteen-century synchronized with a period which witnessed shift in technologies of power. During the last decades of the eighteen-century strategies of power shifted from control over the body through torture towards making the bodies docile by controlling the soul. Michel Foucault in his oeuvre shows how human sciences gradually grew and consolidated their knowledge and practices through which they colonized, transformed and greatly extended the areas of state activity with the result that the state power mutated into its current disciplinary and normalizing form. The imperceptible way of controlling bodies was made possible by human science that became more organized or technically thought-out knowledge. In other worlds they developed an organized political technology of the body. According to Foucault 1760 is the precise time when punishment struck 'the soul rather than the body'.[35]

The intimate rapport between state/power and knowledge is clearly visible in Warren Hastings' letter, written in 1784, where he states "[Every accumulation of knowledge]...is useful to the state...it attracts and conciliates distant affections; it lessens the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection and benevolence.'[36] This passage clearly illustrates how epistemic change brings about changes in the technologies of rule. Hastings was writing his views of knowledge in a period of European history that witnessed epistemic changes in human and natural sciences. He utilized the changed technologies of rule that target the soul. By doing so the colonial administration succeeded to create docile bodies ready to serve the material interest of the British Empire.

In tandem with the expansion of the British Empire, the domain of knowledge also experienced parallel expansion in the shape of societies studying and producing knowledge about other societies. For instance, Bengal was the first province to fall under the rule of British Empire. At the same time we see establishment of the British Asiatic Society of Bengal. With the passage of time British Empire extended its domain far beyond the province of Bengal. On the other side the number of societies and educational institutions increased. The inextricable relationship of colonialism and Orientalism is evident in W.C Taylor's address to the Royal Asiatic Society in London on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Society. After making an appeal for funds to support continuing research and publication by linking the knowledge gained through the study of Oriental literature

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[34] Prakash, Gyan. "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography in Chaturvedi, Vinayak (ed). *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial,* London and New York: Verso, 2000. p 186. See also Colonial penology, and Indian faction.

[35] Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, London: Penguin Books, 1991. p 16.

[36] Cohen, Bernard. "The Command of Language and the Language of Command" in in Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on Indian History and Society,* Delhi, 1985. p 315.

to success in 'the pursuit of Oriental commerce', he sums up his argument by quoting the cliché 'KNOWLEDGE IS POWER (sic)'.[37]

The subaltern studies project is directed against the great truths, great systems and great syntheses, which mark the power/knowledge and colonial/elite matrix of the modern order. It aims to unmask the operation of power to enable those subaltern groups who suffer from grand histories. Its program corresponds to Michel Foucault's genealogy of power wherein, '… the modern encoding of power, in discourses which discipline their participating populations and impose norms upon them, what is suppressed is local, differential knowledge…'.[38] Local peasants were among the subaltern groups who suffered from grand theories of capitalism, socialism and nationalism. Peasant consciousness received little attention in the history written in the service of meta-narratives.

Subaltern studies contend that peasant forms an entity whose will and reason constituted the praxis called rebellion. Ranajit Guha declares the absence of subalterns as 'blind spot of historiography'. He treats the historical writings on peasant insurgency in colonial India as a corpus with overlapping of primary official discourse and academic Orientalism.[39] Discourse of official cum academic Orientalism faced with the difficulty in reporting the peasant rebellions in India, because the reporter's description is defined by his purpose which is informed by administrative concerns. These administrative accounts later became authentic sources for academic historiography of Orientalism. Orientalist scholarship deprived insurgents of will and consciousness. There revolts were seen as spontaneous actions of mobs agitating without structure or order of organization. Since organization was a defining characteristic of the Raj, any threat to it was tantamount to threat to law and order that was again defined by discourse in human science. For Orientalist cum administrators the question about rebellion was not why did they do it? But what was this act that they had done? Answer to this question set in a trend in Orientalist/colonial history where rebels and their programme were dubbed as chaotic and organization amorphous.

On the macro level this view dictated characterization of the Orient as barbarous and chaotic, whereas the West was invested with organization and order. In other words modern west is defined in the backdrop of the Orientalists' construction of the Orient. Both the military prowess and epistemological support formed the cumulative power of colonialism. On the one hand the West had will to power; on the other hand it had epistemological strength to incuse this will on the history of 'Others'. Orientalism inscribed their own meanings and interpretations on different

[37] Taylor. W. C. "On the Present State and Future Prospect of Oriental Literature Viewed" in Connection with the Royal Asiatic Society in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. II (1835), p.4..

[38] Philip, Mark. "Michel Foucault" in Skinner, Quentin. *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Science*. Cambridge, Cambridgeg University Press. p 76.

[39] Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. p 3.

societies and events in such a way that the real character of protagonist and nature of event transformed into a new object which served the binary representation which was indispensable to the discourse of Orientalism. The binary representation of Orientalists associated terrible with 'Others' - local agents and events, and invested fine in 'Us' - colonial power in their case.

Ranajit Guha in his famous article 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency' presents graphical index of the codes associated with 'terrible' and 'fine' attributes. In the index peasants became insurgents, Islamic puritan turned into fanatic, resistance to oppression deemed as daring and wanton atrocities on the Inhabitants, revolt against *zamindari* mis/represented as disturbing the public tranquillity, intention to punish oppressors was dubbed as intention to attack etc., Santal self-rule was mis/read for one of their Gods to reign as a King.[40]After analysing the mis/representation of peasant revolts in Orientalist historiography Guha deduces 'what comes out of the interplay of these mutually implied but opposed matrices is that our texts are not the record of observations uncontaminated by bias, judgment and opinion. On the contrary, they speak of a total complicity.'[41] Subaltern historiography traces the biases that contaminated Orientalism scholarship and made it indispensable part of the power.

Orientalists' Encounter: Absence of Praxis[42]and System of Meanings

Social science labels things or social facts it studies. Despite all claims of objectivity, its categories and names, nevertheless, smacks of subjectivity of the disenchanted world of Europe. It is in the ambience of disenchanted world and culture modern human sciences have developed their epistemological and theoretical postures. Later, these categories have been universalized by historicist approach in human sciences and consequently Orientalism.

When colonial administrators and Orientalists came across other societies during the colonial period, they read them in terms of their own semiotic universe. Because of the essentialist approach, Orientalists were unable to see the broader context that gives meaning to social phenomena, actions and things. They harboured fixed meanings of things and actions about the Orient on the one hand. On the other hand, meaning of things or actions mutates with the change in space and time. Orientalist scholarship toed the line of colonial administrators. They extrapolated universally fixed meaning of their culture into the study of other cultures. That has far reaching influence on different cultural groups of India especially subaltern groups who were already under the dead burden of traditional system of oppression perpetuated by the ruling elite.

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[40] Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. p 15.
[41] Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. p 15.
[42] I am using praxis not in Marxist sense, but in Habermasian sense. Habermas reserves the term for communicative interaction between people, which is governed by moral norms, and contrasts praxis with instrumental action, e.g. in the production of commodities, which is governed by technical rules.

Orientalists' representation got tainted with the meaning of their culture. As a result, a new East was constructed which conveys meaning to its Western audiences, readers, and listeners which is different from what it connotes to its inhabitants. Owing to the status of the East as an object unable to speak, indigenous voices of India are marked by absence. Orientalist took responsibility to speak, write, represent and reconstruct facts about the Orient in capacity of authority.

In its early encounter with Indian rulers, British colonial administration faced with the difficulty in communicating with native populace. British administration in India lacked people who were well versed in the official language of Persian. In order to make up this deficiency, colonial administrators hired people from foreign lands with good knowledge of Persian. But their knowledge of Persian was oblivious to the larger system of meanings in Indian society and court. The Orientalists and administrators did not realize that the acquaintance with language is not enough to enter into the meaning imbedded in culture with all the complexities of systems of meanings. Orientalist's scholarship of Indian culture and philological research of Indian languages represented a picture of India that is characterized by either lack of understanding or antipathy to local socio-cultural semiotics. It failed to see the broader cultural picture, which is larger than the mere language. This failure is well illustrated by the events that tell us about the initial encounters of British with Indian rulers and their predicament in conveying their message to Indian ruler. These events also highlight a lacuna generated by the absence of *verstehen*/empathic understanding on the part Orientalist/British administration about India.

Bernard S. Cohen studies the unbridgeable gap, caused by different systems of meaning, in his essay *The Command of Language and the Language of Command*.[43] Cohen skilfully shows how the difference of system of meanings imbued every act and object of India in a colour and meaning which is unlike the culture of colonialists and Orientalists. He focuses on the interaction of the British monarchy with the Mughal rulers through emissaries. Bernard Cohen illustrates how things and actions at Mughal court gave totally opposite meaning to the respective groups. Explaining the difference of the system of meaning between both parties, Bernard Cohen writes, 'Europeans of the seventeenth century lived in a world of signs and correspondences, while Indians lived in a world of substances.'[44] For example, a Mughal ruler's order was more than an order or entitlement, message or, as the British perceived them, a contract or right. Whoever and whatever was involve in creating the document shared in the authority and substance of the sender which is King in the case of Mughal emperor.[45] In India, a gaze, utterance and every act of its

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[43] Cohen, Bernard. "The Command of Language and the Language of Command" in Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on Indian History and Society,* Delhi, 1985.

[44] Cohen. Bernard. in Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on Indian History and Society,* Delhi, 1985. p 279

[45] Momin, Mohiuddin. *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals, from Babar to Shah Jahan,* Calculta, 1971.

ruler discharges power. On the contrary, in the United Kingdom words in black and white exercise power not only over the addressee but also binds the ruler and his subordinates.

In English cultural context epistle bearer or emissary conveying the message of the regent was not important. His purpose overrides his being a carrier of message. A colonialist emissary can compel himself to undergo, in the words of Sir William Foster, a 'thousand indignities unfit for a quality that represents a Kings Person', and in which he could not accomplish his ends 'without base creeping and bribing'.[46] In the case of Mughal ruler, it was impossible for an emissary to demean himself for he, implicitly or conventionally, shared power of the ruler because of his association with the network of signs and symbols of the power. Demeaning himself was tantamount to demean king. In other words, Indian system of meanings was built on, indistinct conventions which are part and parcel of the Indian cultural life. On the other hand, English system of meanings was in clearly delineated shape where everybody's rights and powers were enshrined in documentary form. Any act outside the clearly stated and delineated statement was deemed to be breach of the contract.

The British colonial system was functioning under the discourse that took shape over time since the event of Magna Carta. The Magna Carta is a manifestation of the devolution of monarch's authority to feudals. However, later the contract of Magna Carta was interpreted as the foundation for the emergence of parliamentary democracy, modern political theory and system of governance. The discourse also approves systems that fit within it and rejects incongruous systems. Likewise, the Western discourse of political theory approves the Magna Carta. Hence, it was impossible for it to approve other systems. Since Orientalists were working within the rules enunciated by the Western canons of governance, it was difficult for them to appreciate other forms of governance in India. Indian history did not experience an event like Magna Carta. So the Oriental form of governance appears misfit in the categories of Western political theory. Orientalists' failure lies in the fact that they misconstrue unlimited power of the Eastern rulers for Oriental barbarism. On the basis of the assumption of barbaric nature of other societies, Orientalists not only supported colonialism but also became complicit of imperialism by attesting the colonial claim of bringing the Orient out of barbarism and ignorance.

Philology holds the centre stage in the project of colonialism and Orientalism. During the formative period of colonialism in India, 'the British successfully began the program of appropriating Indian languages to serve as a crucial component in their construction of the system of rule.'[47] Same observation holds true for

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[46] Foster, Sir William. Ed., the Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India, 1615-19. Passage quoted by Bernard S. Cohn in Cohen. Bernard. "The Command of Language and the Language of Command*" in Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on Indian History and Society,* Delhi, 1985. p 100.
[47] Cohen. Bernard. The Command of Language and the Language of Command in in Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on Indian History and Society,* Delhi, 1985. p 282.

Orientalists who were either administrative-cum-scholars or academicians. Subaltern studies argue that the production of the corpus of historical, philological texts and others which follow them began the establishment of discursive formation that is defined an epistemological space. It created a discourse (Orientalism), and had the effect of converting Indian forms of knowledge into European objects. These texts were produced in the backdrop of power that incorporated the corporate institution of Orientalism to represent Indian languages to European audience in European terms that dominated the language of post-Enlightenment academic disciplines.

Orientalism: Positivism and Romanticism Filling the Detail

The failure of Orientalist scholarship to comprehend Indian language in its system of meaning or with its cultural aspect is caused by the instrumentalist reason entertained by Orientalists. The post-enlightenment Europe is a product of the rational human action. The institutions and beliefs are shaped by instrumentalist/scientific reason which is in its turn is a product of the Enlightenment tradition of positivism. The positivist and objective outlook of the world got ascendancy over every filed of inquiry and discipline including human science. Among various strands of European thought human sciences was immensely influenced positivism.

Orientalism and Positivism

Positivism is natural science's objective outlook of the world and human state of affairs. It is a worldview that is conceived of being in tune with modern science, and which accordingly rejects 'superstition, religion, and metaphysics as pre-scientific forms of thought which will cede to positive science as mankind continues its progress.'[48] As natural science occupies privileged knowledge among disciplines for its success and progress, other institutions and disciplines of the West have therefore come closely to conform to what is, in this discourse, natural[49].

Social science's explanation of the society through the methodologies of natural science made social scientist to ignore cultural aspect of the language. Progress, a product of positivist science, was yardstick through which social scientist measured superiority of a society. Fowers Richardson thinks that positivism treats all values as merely subjective and limiting knowledge to the findings of objective science.[50] Orientalists' treatment of 'Other' pre-modern societies partially stems from such an approach. Jürgen Habermas provides scathing critique of 'both familiar and evils and injustices and with new forms of domination and corruption' that are somewhat unique to a modern technological society. In his critique of technology we can include technology of governing. Habermas deems that the modern society is to a

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[48] Mautner, Thomas (ed). *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosohy*. Penguin Books, London, 2000. pp 437-8.
[49] Ronald Inden. "Orientalist Constructions of India" in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed. *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial,* London and New York: Verso, 2000. p 415.
[50] Richardson, Franck and Fower, Blaine. Interpretative Social Science: An Overview in *American Social Scientist* Vol. 41 No. 4. January 1998, Sage Publications. Inc, 1998, p 477.

great extent constructed on detrimental confusion of *praxis* (cultural meaningful actions) with *techne* (technical capacity). Elaborating Habermas' idea Fowers writes, 'this kind of society tends to collapse the cultural and moral dimension of life into merely technical and instrumental considerations. It harmfully reverses their priority, putting techne on top'[51]. As a consequence, according to Habermas 'the relationship of theory to praxis can now only assert itself as the purpose –rational application of techniques assured by empirical science.' Such applications 'produce technical recommendations, but they furnish no answer to practical [or moral] questions.'[52]

Orientalists' study of the Orient aimed at producing technical recommendations to the Raj at the expense of practical and moral rights of the natives. In this endeavour, Orientalist approach was governed by reverse priority that puts techne at the top and praxis at the lower end. Indian languages studied by Orientalists were indispensable part of Indian praxis. Vernacular intellect of subaltern groups was expressed in terms of local praxis and within its cultural semiotics. Subaltern studies' critique is in line with the points Said made clear in the book 'Orientalism' where he accused 'Orientalism' of seeing people of the non-West as convenient objects of analysis for the social sciences but ignores their intellectual and ethical existence. Orientalists' outlook deprives these languages of cultural context and transforms them into instruments at the service of the imperial rule.

The segregation of cultural meaning led to a knowledge that does not exist in the cultural space or praxis of subaltern groups, but exists in an epistemological space which is known as Orientalism. Orientalist texts signal the invasion of an epistemological space occupied by a great number of a diverse variety of Indian scholars, intellectuals, teachers, scribes, priests, lawyers, officials merchants and bankers, whose knowledge, as well as they themselves, were to be converted into instruments of colonial rule.[53] In addition to local technologies of power, the discursive formation also produced categories that strengthened the grip of imperialism as well as the national elite of India. In the production of army for services and knowledge, the instrumental reason served as overriding principle of the Raj and Orientalism. Bernard Cohn is of the opinion that 'the knowledge which this small group of British officials sought to control was to be the instrumentality through which they were to issue commands and collect ever-increasing amounts of information'.[54] The information helped British administration to govern effectively the far and wide of the country. It also served as a way to identify and classify groups within Indian society.

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[51] Richardson, Franck and Fower Blaine. Interpretative Social Science: An Overview in *American Social Scientist* Vol. 41 No. 4. January 1998, Sage Publications. Inc, 1998, pp. 465-495. p 474.
[52] Habermas, Jurgen. *Theory and Practice,* Boston: Beacon, 1973. p 254.
[53] Cohen. Bernard. The Command of Language and the Language of Command in in Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on Indian History and Society,* Delhi, 1985. p 283.
[54] Cohen. Bernard. The Command of Language and the Language of Command in in Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on Indian History and Society,* Delhi, 1985. p 283.

Following their manifesto to develop a critique of Orientalists and elite, Subaltern historians see elite as one who conspires with colonial powers to perpetuate their status quo in order to protect their vested interest. Cohn asserts that the British officials, with the help of information, had to found elites within Indian society who could be made to see that they had an interest in the maintenance of British rule.[55] It is these elites who became torchbearers of nations in the post-colonial states in subcontinent. Subaltern studies bring the dark side of colonial elite under the spotlight of its criticism of Orientalist and elite historiography.

Orientalism and Romanticism

The romantic outlook can be included in the second major influence in Orientalist approach. Romanticism relished in emotional, spontaneous savage and uncivilized aspects of society. Its aesthetic indulgence with emotional aspect of life was an escape from the increasing mechanization in western culture; it nevertheless, helped the Orientalist assumptions of Eastern society. In other words, romantic aestheticism became unwilling accomplice of imperialism by representing the same image in their art and literature.[56] The scientific and aesthetic stances may appear to be antithetical, their outlook is invariably same with the difference that the former looks down on the 'Other' as an object of scientific analysis, and the later looks up to the 'Other' as an aesthetic idol. Kojin Karatani claims that, 'It makes scientific and aesthetic stance less contradictory than complicit'.[57] Although industrial revolution robbed traditional things of their function and place in society, it gave them a new romantic aura by making them things of primitive and pre-industrial societies. With the advent of industrial revolution the handmade things had been transformed into art because these object were rendered obsolete by industrial production. Likewise, the characteristics attributed to the Orient by Orientalists were the traits that, according to Europeans, became obsolete with the Enlightenment project. Europeans tried to establish their rationality by representing the barbarous, arbitrary, tyrannical, lascivious traits as the exotic Orient. It seems that Orientalists established truth by resorting to aesthetic laden observation. They did bracket the truth in categories of romantic aesthetic because through truth they can establish hegemony over the romantic east.

When orientalists spoke about the Orient to their audiences, they failed to realize that aesthetic stance coloured their view of the East. By doing so they confused reality with category, along with all its characteristics, invented by the imagination of romantic outlook. Writing about Orientalists' confusion of the reality Karatani states, 'they (Orientalists) confuse the reality of the other with what is achieved by bracketing. Or they confuse their respect for beauty with respect for the other. Thus,

[55] Cohen. Bernard. The Command of Language and the Language of Command in in Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on Indian History and Society,* Delhi, 1985. p 284

[56] For a detail survey of representations of the East in the Western literature and art and their liaison with imperialism see Edward W. Said. *Culture and Imperialism,* London. Vintage, 1994.

[57] Karatani, Kojin. "Uses of aesthetics: after orientalism" in Paul A, Bove, ed. *Edward Said and the work of the critic: speaking truth to power*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000. p 141.

for aestheticentrists, colonialism is conveniently obscured.'[58] Karatani accepts the accusation that colonialism and imperialism were sadistic forms of invasion and domination. He believes that by the term Orientalism Said meant that 'the most typical subversion of colonialism is its aestheticentrist way of appreciating and respecting the other.'[59] Sudipta Kaviraj differs with the approach, like Karatani, that give dominant position to romanticism or Orientalism. His observation is that the general outline of the homogenous picture of India was Orientalist; much of the actual detail was produced by romantic tendency which was not 'orientalist' from that point of view.[60] Kivaraj is right in not treating romantic view as Orientalist. However, the difficulty is that Orientalism cannot be described as a literary and intellectual movement like romanticism. It is rather a corporate institution that incorporated various disciplines, intellectual trends and biases of the West into its institutional discourse. Orientalism is the cumulative result of colourings of the Orient by different viewpoints that filled the details of Orientalism by their own colours. The cultural, philosophical, romantic and methodological factors of disenchanted world of the West formed the tapestry of human sciences upon which scholarly approaches to the mystical and religious Orient have been painted. The cultural presuppositions of modern western society directly impinge upon the academic study of mysticism and religion.[61]

Orientalism and Religion: Disenchanted Gaze Views Enchanted World

There is no way we can say that Orientalism appropriated indigenous approach in its study of other societies. Orientalist approach and methodology was imbedded in the disenchanted world of the West. It was not the mystery of the East that puts limits on Orientalists' attempt of cross-cultural understanding. Rather it was the textual bias of modern concept of religion constructed by discursive practices that are closely connected to Enlightenment roots of religious studies.[62] When Orientalists made use of methodology, labels and vocabulary of disenchanted social science they lacked categories to represent religion in social science. Writing about the predicament of Indian secular scholarship Chakrabarty writes 'The self image of modern Indian secular scholarship, particularly the strands that flowed into Marxist social history writing, not only partakes of the social sciences' view of the world as "disenchanted," but even displays antipathy to anything that smacks of the religious. The result has been a certain kind of paralysis of imagination, remarkable for a

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[58] Karatani, Kojin. Uses of aesthetics: after orientalism in Paul A, Bove, ed. *Edward Said and the work of the critic: speaking truth to power*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000. p 145.

[59] ibid

[60] Kaviraj, Sudipta. "The Imaginary Institution of India" in Ranajit Guha, ed. "The Imaginary Institution of India" in Partha Chatterjee and Gyanendra Pandey, ed. *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on Indian History and Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992. pp 12-14. p 15.

[61] See '*Disciplining Religion*' in King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic East'*, London: Routledge, 1999. It provides an overview of the relation between underlying cultural presupposition of modern West and the academic study of religion.

[62] For a detail treatment of the problematic nature of the concept of world religion and textual bias of modern concept of religion see chapter 3 of *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic East'*, by Richard King ;Also Asad, Talal. *Geneologies of Religion: Disciplines and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, London, John Hopkins University Press, 1993.

country whose people have never shown any sense of embarrassment about being able to imagine the supernatural in a variety of forms.'[63] Talal Asad questions the validity of the modern concept of religion in the study of religion. He lays great emphasis on the need of some understanding, on the part of anthropologists who would study beliefs and practices, of how 'religion' has come to be formed as concept and practice in the modern west. 'For' writes Asad 'while religion is in integral to modern Western history, there are dangers in employing such a normalisizing concept when translating Islamic traditions.'[64]

Emergence of the notion of Hindu "religion" is a product of employing such a normalizing concept of religion in Indian context. The reason behind putting the term religion, instead of Hindu, in scare quote is to highlight the fallacy of treating Hindu as religion in the sense defined in post-Enlightenment human sciences. Hindu is a name for culture practices whose foundations are based on plurality of practices and heterogeneity of interpretations. The specific nature of 'Hinduism', however, was the product of an interaction between the Western Orientalist and the brahmanical pundit.[65] While developing the idea of religion Orientalists, social scientists and scholars of religion based their observations upon the Judaeo-Christian understanding of religion. This understanding was monotheistic which is diametrically opposite to the pluralistic interpretations of Hinduisms. In Indian history and texts there was nothing like a monolithic Hindu community, but rather an acknowledgement of a plurality of local, occupational and caste contexts in which different customs or rules applied.[66] Since Orientalist focused on texts, their reading of the Hindu texts was tainted by their Judaeo-Christian episteme within which they conceived of religion. William Jones' translating and taking the Dharmashastras as a Hindu law books was natural outcome of Judaeo-Christian paradigm of religion. The attempt of Jones to apply such a book universally is a reflection his 'textual imperialism.[67] Coupled with monotheistic examples of religion, the culture of disbelief in the post-Enlightenment era helped develop the idea of a single religious entity known as Hinduism. The people who initially invented the notion of a Hindu religion were the ones who studied and wrote in capacity of authorities were none

[63] Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002. p 25. For discussion about problems a secular subject, like history, faces in handling imaginations in which gods, spirits, or the supernatural have agency in the world see Chakarabarty, Dipesh. "The Time of History and the Times of Gods" in Lisa Lowe and David Lyold (ed). *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*. Durham N.C: Duke University Press. 1997.
[64] Asad, Talal. *Geneologies of Religion: Disciplines and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, London, John Hopkins University Press, 1993. p 1.
[65] King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic East'*, London: Routledge, 1999. p 90.
[66] Thaper, Romila. Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the modern search for a Hindu Identity', in *Modern Asian Studies* 23.2, 1989, pp. 209-231.p 224. For analysis of creation of imagined communities in modern period see Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, London: Verso Books, 1991.
[67] Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, ed. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993. p 7.

other than the Orientalists. [68] Therefore, we can claim that the notion of a Hindu religion is a construct of the discursive practice of Orientalism.

The subaltern historians' emphasis on local histories is not meant to idealize or support native nationalism. At times their too much focus on local character of subaltern groups proved conducive to Hindu nationalists.[69] Nevertheless, subaltern studies research of subaltern groups unravels the hidden ideological bias of the Orientalist assumptions that contributed to the development of homogenous India. By the same token the subaltern historians reject the fascist agenda of Hindutva forces in India. They condemn Indian nationalism, for nationalist thought did not do away with the ontological construction of the Orient and Orientalist discourse. In The subaltern scholars think that the national thought of colonial period as well as contemporary Hindu nationalist thought worked within a body of knowledge which shows the same theoretical framework as Orientalism.[70]. It is precisely this framework of thought which became target of subaltern studies. To Subaltern historians, Indian history is a history of bourgeois-nationalist elite. Elitist history completely dominated subaltern groups who lost their voice in the grand narrative of nationalism. Contemporary Hindu nationalism subscribes to the idea of homogeneous India and single Hindu religion constructed by the framework harboured by Orientalists. Its homogenizing agenda suppresses subaltern groups on the one side, and turning erstwhile dominant and large communities, like Muslim, into subalterns on the other.

Conclusion

The Subaltern Studies Group is an emancipatory project to rescue suppressed and peripheral voices which have been drowned by the meta-narratives of post-enlightenment ideologies. On the other hand, it is corrective to the bifurcation of thought and practice in European thought. Although European colonizers preached humanism of the Enlightenment, they did not practice it in reality. The subaltern studies bridges the gap between the ideology and praxis by critically engaging with Orientalist and nationalist thought. It allows the subaltern historians to examine Eurocentric categories and concepts, and identify hidden operation of ideology on textual and cultural bodies. Such a critical scrutiny enables the subaltern historians to avoid a sweeping rejection of rationality of the Enlightenment and appreciate what is valuable in it.

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[68] King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic East'*, London: Routledge, 1999. p 90.

[69] For a general critique of Subaltern Studies and implication of its localist view of history see Sumit Sarkar's "Orientalism Revisited: Saidian Frameworks in the Writing of Modern Indian History" in Chaturvedi, Vinayak (ed). *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial,* London and New York: Verso, 2000. pp 300-323.

[70] Chatterjee, Partha. "Gandhi and the Critique of Civil Society" in Guha, Ranajit (ed). *The Prose of Counter-Insurgency in Subaltern Studies III: Writings on Indian History and Society*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984. p 155.

In spite of their critical study of and engagement with European categories, subaltern historians do not delve deep into the genealogies of these categories because the categories are not rooted in the life world of subaltern groups. The subaltern historians avoid these not because they lack expertise to do it, but they are aware of repercussions of an attempt to translate cross-cultural practices. Orientalists' mis/representation is partly a result of their venture of translating the Orient in the cultural terms of Europe. In addition, the realization of the dangers of cross-cultural translation on the part of the subaltern historians manifests their reflexivity with respect for other cultures and values. This approach is one of the salient components of cosmopolitan virtue.

Subaltern studies' critique of Orientalism brings forth the fact that the Orientalists were emotionally attached to their culture and detached to other societies; their discourse was plug into colonial powers that espoused grand narratives of modernity. Orientalists became emissaries of these narratives due to their lack of appreciation of other cultures, especially religious cultures, and the impersonal outlook fostered by culture of disbelief in the post-Enlightenment period. Most of the members of Subaltern Studies Collective inhabit spaces outside India. It helps them to develop a mentality in order to achieve some emotional distance from their own culture. The group also displays its care for other cultures, especially aboriginal cultures arising from an awareness of their precarious condition and hence acceptance of cultural hybridization; an ecumenical appreciation of other cultures, especially religious cultures; and scepticism towards the grand narratives of modern age. Bryan Turner describes all these qualities as Cosmopolitan Virtue.[71] He regards 'Said's moral vision of intellectuality as a defence of Cosmopolitanism, which can be defined as the ethical world view of scholars in a global context where cultural hybridity and multiculturalism are beginning to rewrite the traditional Orientalist agenda.'[72]

Subaltern historiography has erased the early historical inscriptions of Orientalists on the palimpsest of Indian history. Despite such erasures, the past writing and overwriting cannot be completely erased. They continue to remain integral part of cultural and historical texts. Subaltern studies read Orientalist history against the grain of what Orientalists hold true. Their programme constituted a struggle for the rehabilitation of subaltern groups who were expunged from the land of history by Orientalist and nationalist texts. Orientalist discourse erased prior constructions of the land in the Orient; allowed it to be seen as an empty space, ready to receive their inscriptions. Orientalism created such spaces by erasing subaltern groups from the pages of history. In India there were number of groups that existed as autonomous and unnamed. These groups were displaced, denigrated and in some cases

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[71] For elaboration of the idea of Cosmopolitan Virtue see Turner, Bryan S. *Cosmopolitan Virtue, Globalization and Patriotism, Theory, Culture & Society,* London: Sage, Vol, 19; Number 1-2 February – April 2002, pp. 45-63; Turner, Cosmopoliton Virtue: On Religion in a Global Age, *European Journal of Social Theory,* London: Sage, 4 (2), 2001, pp. 131-151.

[72] Turner, Bryan S. on "Edward W. Said in Profiles" in Turner, Bryan S and Elliot Anthony, ed. *Profiles in Contemporary Social Theory*, London: Sage, 2001. p 391.

exterminated vis-à-vis the colonial values and modes of representation in Orientalism. The subaltern studies historiography claims to have recovered all these groups by denigrating the Orientalist's association with power, displacing Europe from the centre stage of history, exterminating the epistemological and cultural presumptions of Orientalism, and rehabilitating subaltern groups in the pages of Indian history as agency with will and consciousness of their own.

I think this is the most valuable contribution of the Subaltern Studies Collective is their challenge to epistemic imperialism by critiquing Orientalism at epistemological level. This is a step towards change of political system at global level that safeguards the interest of powerful and suppresses voices of subaltern societies by the sheer force of institutional imperialism and structural violence. Subaltern studies contains cogent reason for its resistance against epistemic as well as material imperialism. Hence, we see emergence of subaltern studies in its South East Asian, African and Latin American variants. The subaltern ideology infuses consciousness among subaltern class as an agency with a will to bring about change in the oppressive systems of the contemporary world that tend to suppress subaltern voices. And this bears the testimony to the Subaltern Studies' claim of being an emancipatory project.