

## **The pursuit of Pashtoon image in the Orientalists Discourse:**

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**Abstract:** *The leading educational and research disciplines are considered as an outgrowth of European colonialism. The learning brigades along with European colonizers also known as Orientalists have constructed a knowledge base that has thrived theories and notions regarding the Near Eastern and Far Eastern societies , cultures, languages, peoples, history and civilizations in general. After the Second World War (1945), Orientalism was emerged as career that presented contents and notions written and interpreted by the colonial masters. This paper is going to*

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*discuss the construction of Pashtoon's identity in the context of European colonialism. The paper probes the different cadres of Orientalists that, presented biased sketches of the indigenous Pashtoon and Afghan people they countered in three wars during the colonial era. It is interesting to note that, even today most of the notions wrapped in the modern orientalist narratives are backed by evidences provided the so-called learning brigades of the colonial era. Triangulation of different narratives indicates that, the Pashtoon image constructed through colonial/orientalist archives has a connection with the British Empire's agendas of hegemony and domination. Different cohorts of orientalists have presented varied perspective that evidently reflect the legitimacy if the colonial tools for subjugation.*

### **The Great Game; Afghans between the Devil and the Deep Sea**

The first trade expedition of East India Company was carried in 1604 (Maddani, Husain Ahmed<sup>1</sup>)[1] that gradually subdued the Indian subcontinent in the following two centuries. In the first decade of the nineteenth century the defeat of Napoleonic France rendered an imbalance amongst the colonial rivals. The Russia was supposed to be the potential power to generate its influence in the Afghan territory that would cause a threat to the interests of the Britain. Hence a pull and push scene of Great Game was started in 1809 [2]. The Britain and other European colonizers strive to divert the foreign policy of Afghanistan for protecting their interests in the Indian subcontinent and the other areas adjacent to the Afghan borders. Britain East India Company for its ambitious plans launched a confronting policy called Closed Boarder Policy in 1830s that resulted in the first Anglo-Afghan war (1839-1842)"[3]. In the wake of the 1857 War of Independence (also referred as Mutiny in the colonial chronicles) East India Company was replaced by Great Britain crown and Indian subcontinent was directly governed under the British crown.

*"Hence the closed border policy which rendered two devastating Anglo-Afghan wars was gradually replaced by the Forward Policy in the decade of 1876 (Caroe, 1958)"[4]. The forward policy was aimed to treat the tribal Pashtoon in accordance to their own customs and manners so that a room of a likeness and respect for their ways could be portrayed for generating trust in the Pashtoons. The series of wars amongst the invading expansionist Britain's and native Pashtoons have been continued even after the last Anglo Afghan war fought in 1919. The attacks of the Pashtoon freedom fighters have a long account to be explored and narrated.*

As a most influential and powerful colonizer, the Britain empire cater trained anthropologists, ethnographers, narrators and reporters labeled as "the learned brigades" by Edward Said in his famous book "Orientalism".

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The image of Pashtoons is presented by the British colony officers, administrators, visitors and spy through their various accounts on their advents on the land of Pashtoons. The bitter memories of the devastating wars with Pashtoons are conserved in the form of books, memoirs, diaries, sketches, reports and journals.

### **The of Distortion of Pashtoon's self-image;**

Pashtoon live on crossroads that has been passed by invaders from the different corners of the world in the different historical eras. The Persians, Mongols and British empires are of greater importance to our subject. Though the former two had less practices of systemic domination and its legitimacy through academic, cultural and social apparatus but the oral tradition preserves contents that can be analyzed for unpacking the peculiar stereotyping of the particular ethnicity.

Bahadur Shah Zafar Kakakhel in his valuable work on the history of Pashtoons has disclosed that, in the wake of retaking the throne from the Pashtoons Suri dynasty(1557), the Mughal-Persian alliance fabricated a fake image of Pashtoons and labeled them as “Dew Zaad<sup>1</sup>”. It was an effective psychological tactic that tend to create skepticism and degenerated the self-esteem of Pashtoons that had the potential to pose challenges to the Mughal dynasty. The oral tradition and folk stories also mix stuff that, underestimate the language and culture of Pashtoons. The origin of the very irrational notion that, “Pashto is the language of Hell” need to be traced back, that definitely is extended and replicated in the colonial-oriental chronicles. The colonial period Report on the Tribes of the Dir, Swat and Bajuar reinforces this myth, “*the Language of hell is certainly Pashto, owing to number of Pathans there [5]*”. This evidence may create a theory to draw a nexus to the three empires who confronted Pashtoons on their land.

### **Legitimizing the colonial oppression:-**

Historical analysis shows that, indigenous people in all over the world have always posed resistance to the Eurocentric racism and Imperialism based on economic exploitation, slavery, violence and domination. There have been countless accounts of rejecting and challenging the notion of “the white man's burden” in all over the world. Besides the oppressive colonial armies, the cadres of narrators and reporters have always been presenting the natives of colonies synonymous to savages or the races that are not evolved to their full human potentials. The cadres of reporters and political agents from the western hemisphere gradually became authorities on the rest of the world's cultures, languages, histories, races, faiths and all that can represent and interpret their

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<sup>1</sup> Dew Zaad mean the race originated from the Savages rather than human.

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identities. Edward .W. Said the reckoned dissent and public intellectual has unpacked this situation in his famous account 'Orientalism'. *“As discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with orient dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it be teaching it, settling it, ruling over it... .”*[6]

A talk delivered in the Library of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs on the evening of 10th November 2005, Bijan Omrani declare the diverse forms of chronicles produced by the Europeans, he writes, *“ It is quite a daunting task to pick out just a couple of the books about Afghanistan in the Society’s library. There is a paralyzing embarrassment of riches. The country has always attracted the most brilliant and raffish sort of adventurers and deserters, spies and eccentrics, many of whom have left us their memoirs. The library contains not only ordinary travel books, but also journals, autobiographies and biographies, formal histories, official accounts, and journalistic reports”*.[7]

Analysis of the various accounts as produced by the initial colonial envoys, officers, administrative staff and ethnographers clearly indicates they have always identified the native populations with scarcity and weaknesses. The intent behind the study of the orient was to construct a moral legitimacy of the occident's oppression and prove it as a natural phenomenon.

### **The way they see and define others:**

In the subcontinent and mainly Pashtoon territory 'Orientalism' in its initial forms seems informal which takes roots gradually when the responsibility of studying and defining the orient is shifted from the army officers and political administrators to the learned brigades of ethnographers, anthropologist and historians in the early decade of twentieth century.

### **Through the eyes of Traders and Spies:**

In the wake of the Great Game (1812) the very first cadres sent to study the Afghan land pretended as tourists and traders. Contents analysis of their works indicates a sense of surprise and revelations. Elphinstone who visited the territory as a tourist and later on proved as political diplomat has a content of much inspiration with diction dominated by revelations and friendship. His relationship with the common Pashtoon was much different as that of the other political officers and narrators of the later days.

Analysis of the narrations depicted by the several ethnographers and political officers of later days indicates that a cross cutting influence of orientalist of the

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earlier days could be seen. Like the Elphinstone's approach has been practiced and the realities are contextualized with an angled vision and fragmented frame of reference. As predecessors, he is still believed relevant and quoted by most of the western and eastern careerists. Stephen Tanner, in his recent works on the military history of Afghanistan has phrased, "At one point Elephanstine argued with an old tribesman, stressing the benefits of social stability under firm government rule. *"We are content with discord, we are content with alarms, we are content with blood, "the old man told him but" we will never be content with a master"* [8].

This is a specific connotation which affirms a sheer generalization on the average person living in that part of the world. Similarly he has reported about the specific tenets of Pashtoonwali like J. W. Spain has raised the point. *"About the tenets of Pakhtoonwali, Elphinstone, as most writers after him, is specific about Badal (revenge) traveling in the grand manner of the seventeenth century, he hardly notices Nanawate the right of sanctuary"* [9]. These tendencies in his approach are common as Stephen Tanner has also pointed out, *"On this first mission, Elphinstone perceived flaws in the Afghan character, such as tendencies towards envy, avarice, discord and revenge"* [10]'. Such tendencies are also seen in the works followed by his account which is mainly perceived as a bible for the coming slot. As Charles Masson in his three volume narrative of various journeys in Blochistan, Afghanistan and Punjab (1842) and English captain John Wood's *"A journey to the source of river Oxus"(1837). Both accounts are full of examples of badal<sup>2</sup>, melmestia<sup>3</sup> and Nanawati<sup>4</sup>, but these are never named, the authors preferring to comment on the nature of Pathans rather than on their beliefs"* [11].

### **Seeing Pathans through the Guns:**

The huge amount of Orientalists stuff is produced through the memories, reports, travelogue and general accounts of the persons who were physically engaged in the conflict for imposing their forward policy or closed border policy. One can also see interesting accounts as narrated by the women as Lady Sale who was along with her husband during the first Anglo-Afghan war. She has recorded her observations in diary, which opens revealing accounts of the days they trapped amongst the strong Pashtoon warriors. The account that has republished several times has become a significant source of information and analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> Badal a Pashto word which means 'revenge'

<sup>3</sup> Hospitality, especially to the persons from the far flung areas.

<sup>4</sup> 'Nanawate' a Pashtoon cultural practice of the submission of the offender and his/her family and tribe to the victim and his/her family and tribe which often end the conflict with non-violence.

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There is visible divergence in the diction of the writers who were pursuing the close border policy with that of the others materializing the forward policy. About these two policies Sir Olaf Caroe in his famous account 'The Pathan' has shared, "*The fifty -odd years from the British Annexation up to 1901 are best seen in two periods, the first from 1849 to the outbreak of the second Afghan war in 1878 ...the first thirty years are represent the testing time of the so-called closed border policy*"[12] '.The closed border policy as pursued in the first thirty years resulted two Anglo-Afghan wars. While the forward policy which was adopted by the newly elected government of Prime Minister Disraeli was aimed to "*build a strategic line of defense against Russian pressure in Central Asia*" [13].

W.L. Churchill(1874-1965) the renowned British political figure of the twentieth century has shared an experience filled with cynicism. His diction and general connotation comprises the sheer racist version. In his account 'Malakand Field force (1892)' he observes an overwhelming barbarism and wickedness. He has shared his experience in these words, "*Every influence, every motive, that provokes the spirit of murder among men, impels these mountaineers to deeds of treachery and violence. The strong aboriginal propensity to kill, inherit in all human beings, has in these valleys been preserved in unexampled strength and vigor. That religion, which above all others was founded and propagated by the sword--the tenets and principles of which are instinct with incentives to slaughter and which in three continents has produced fighting breeds of men--stimulates a wild and merciless fanaticism* [14]".

During his confrontation to the very tough Pashtoon tribesman, Churchill was supposed to cast an inferior glance at their culture and religion. He could not supersede them in the battle field but he was successful to label them as fanatics and merciless through his account. He assumes that, the very primary characteristic in the blood of Pashtoon is bloodshed. He has oversimplified the notion in the following manner. "*Every tribesman has a blood feud with his neighbor. Every man's hand is against the other and all against the stranger*" [15].

Making mock of the natives and casting at them an inferior bird eye view, is the very common characteristic of the colonial reporters. Howard Zinn the reckoned historian and public intellectual have unearthed the letters of Christopher Columbus to the Queen Azabella written in 1493. As a mouthpiece of modern European Civilization, the mocking at the ways of natives has been extended from Columbus to Winston Churchill. Chirchill further elaborates, "*We see them in their squalid, loophole hovels, amid dirt and ignorance, as degraded a race as any on the fringe of humanity: fierce as the tiger, but less cleanly; as dangerous, not so graceful. Those simple family virtues, which idealists usually ascribe to primitive peoples, are conspicuously absent. Their wives and their women-kind generally, have no*

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*position but that of animals. They are freely bought and sold, and are not infrequently bartered for rifles. Truth is unknown among them. A single typical incident displays the standpoint from which they regard an oath. In any dispute about a field boundary, it is customary for both claimants to walk round the boundary he claims, with a Koran in his hand, swearing that all the time he is walking on his own land” [16].*

Similarly Lady Sale (1790-1853) who was accompanied by her husband to install a pipit regime in Afghanistan that led to the first Anglo-Afghan war, also presented the Pathan tribesman with a sheer subjective manner. *“Afghan of the capital(Kabul) are a little more civilized, but the country gentlemen and their retainers are much the same kind of people those Alexander encountered[17]’.*

The image of the Pathans as narrated denotes that, Pathans are anti-protagonist and as a martial race they are the strongest enemies ever faced by the British. Rodenbough in his account display the war capability of the nineteenth century Pathans, *“As a trait of Afghan character, I must mention that whenever the Jezailchis<sup>5</sup> could snatch five minutes to refresh themselves with a pipe, one of them would twang a sort of a rude guitar as an accompaniment to some martial song, which, mingling with the notes of war, sounded very strangely.[18]”*

Archibald Forbes (1838-1900) as observer of the first Anglo-Afghan war has coined the word 'savage' and 'bloody' . The scene is that, the independent territory of Afghans was ravaged for securing the interest of Britain empires and constraining the political influences of Russia through its closed border policy through a puppet pensioner prince Shah Shuja(1785-1842). In this reaction the Afghan tribes took a serious charged and ruined almost all the army in Kabul. In the wake of the very degenerated self esteem, the Archibald Forbes has portrayed situation as following. Who presents the Pashtoon how is an interesting analysis of the constructed knowledge base about history, culture and civilization. While going peacefully to Afghanistan for installing the Shah Shuja's regime the British army was posed almost a negligible resistance. Alexander Burns (1805-1841) in his voyage along with Shah Shuja has written *his feeling in a letter to his sister. “They have no prejudices against a Christian, and none against our nation. When they ask me if I eat pork, I of course shudder and say it is only outcasts who commit such outrages. God forgive me! For I am very fond of bacon, and my mouth waters as I write the word”.[19]*

It is certainly a spontaneous version of the cultural interaction that has been gradually converted into harsh memories of bloodshed and massacre of the Bruisers in the first Anglo-Afghan war.

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<sup>5</sup> The persons who operates the 'Jazile' the 18<sup>th</sup> century long powder gun traditionally used by Pathans.

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*“The patriotism of a savage race is marked by features repulsive to civilized communities, but through the ruthless cruelty of the indiscriminate massacre, the treachery of the stealthy stab, and the lightly broken pledges, there may shine out the noblest virtue that a virile people can possess. A semi-barbarian nation whose manhood pours out its blood like water in stubborn resistance against an alien yoke, may be pardoned for many acts shocking to civilized communities which have not known the Bitterness of stern and masterful subjugation”[20].*

The last British political agent and Orientalists Sir Olaf Caroe (1892-1981), is perceived as the most respected and valued authority on the subject of Pathan ethnography and the tradition of Pashtoonwali. Content analysis of his famous volume “The Pathan” discloses that, he has demonstrated contrasting image which glamorizes the martial spirit of Pathan and identify Pathan as a good enemy but having an unpredictable attitude as friend. At one place he has concluded that the lives of the average Pashtan follow a meaningless trajectory and they portray their gestures synonymous to the animals. *“They are not much better than the animals, for save the eating and drinking, moving about their hills seeking their prey on the highways, and dying, they know ought besides[21]*

Captain A.H. Mc Mahon Political Agent Dir also presents a very subjective image of the Pathans. In his co-authored account with Lieutenant A. D. G. Gramsay, he has used prominent racist approach to de-legitimize the social and cultural realities of the Pathans of that part of the world. About Pathan's morality and belief it is recorded, *“A Pathan admits, one half of the (holly) Koran, , but not the other ; one foot of the Pathan is in Paradise, the other in Hell; the Language of hell is certainly Pashtu, owing to number of Pathans there ; the sacred law is good but not suited for healthy young man[22].*

Richard Issac Bruce who sailed for India in 1862 and was appointed as Extra Assistant Commissioner in Punjab later becomes a right hand man of Robert Sandamen for the implementation of his “Forward Policy”. Collecting the memories regarding the implementation of the forward Policy in his narrative “The Forward policy” he has taken a sketch of frontier Pashtoon tribes (later on misnomer them as part of British Balochsitan) from 1862-1898. In the opening chapter he mentioned account he has clearly narrated that their intervention through forward policy approach was a panacea for the Pashtoon tribes living on 54000 Sq Km around today's Durand line. *“If I can, by a plain unvarnished tale of what has come under my own observation and the conclusion, I have drawn, succeed in these objects, and enlisting the sympathies of my readers in the noble and worthy cause of the civilization of the frontier tribes”[23].*

This account carries a peculiar colonial connotation. The writer has particularly mourn over the deaths of his colleagues and quite contrary has danced over the

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ruins of the Pashtoon tribes. He portrays a romantic sketch when the castle of the reckoned freedom fighter 'Shahjehan jogezeai' was blown with explosive mater.

Bruce as defender of the forward policy approach has molded the history in its own direction. He along with Maclover and Robert Sandeman have concluded that Pathans having its egalitarian temptations are not easily manageable as compare to the Baloch and Brahvi tribes. Bruce describes Pathans as fanatics, *Badmashees* and culprits while on the other hand it is narrated that, the Pashtoon tribes like Kakars, Barozais and Tarins have invited them to protect them from their immediate Marri and Bugti neighbor's. In this account 'The foreword Policy' he has narrated, *"I also, under major Sandamen's directions, opened up relations with Dummars , Panizais and Sarangzais(Kakars), the Tarin of Harnai valley and thall Choteali and the Barozais and Pannis of Sangan. They constantly reiterated cry of the Tarins, Barozais and Pannis was that we should come in and occupy their country and secure their protection for their lives and property from their implacable enemies the Marries and Bugties[24]."*

The above mentioned statement indicates Bruce's fake attempt of legitimizing their invasion. It also cater a contradiction that, at one point they declared Pashtoon as egalitarian and uneasy to be managed and on the other hand the same Pashtoon tribes invite them to be protected from their very immediate neighbors they have been living with for centuries.

The mocking aspect of the accounts and memoirs generated by the political administrators and military officers admires the individuals and tribes who show obedience and submit their services for the empire. To the contrary the freedom fighters and resistant tribes are always mentioned as fanatics, savage, uncivilized and culprits etc. Like Major Maclover, political agent of the Thal Chaotically, has coined the term *"Badmashes"* for the freedom fighters in his letter to Richard Issac Bruce, *"you know of course, that after you made over charge several cases of Ghaza occurred in Bori and Duki, and Badmashes invariably took refuge in Mina Bazar with Umar Khan".[25]*

Theo. F. Rodenbough has explored an unprecedented possibility of the war and violence in the characters of Pathan. His narration concludes that, the meaning of life in the view of an ordinary Pathan is to kill or to be killed by an enemy. He has put forward his judgment, *"The love of war is felt much more among Afghans than by other Eastern peoples, although but little effort has been made by them to augment the means of resistance and aggression".[26]*

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Some of the Orientalists like Redenbough see an engineered default in the character of Pashtoon. They perceived and propagated a linear and monotonic identity of Pashtoon that has no organic substance and will remain the same forever. He has further elaborated *further elaborates this points, "There is no shade of difference between the character of the nomad and the citizen; a town life does not soften their habits; they live there as they live in a tent, armed to the teeth and ready for the onslaught[27].*

The leading stereotype of sketching the Pathan as a warrior is the cross cutting. It is evident somewhere while in most of the cases the orientalist have pointed it between the lines. Similarly the rhetoric and over simplification of the reality could be studied as a cross cutting phenomenon. About Afghans and Afghanistan history an Orientalist of the later days have written. *"Afghanistan has nothing but stones and men: the stones made good Sungars<sup>6</sup>, which thousands of men were always ready to defend[28].*

The stereotyping of Pashtoon as warriors is common in the colonial and post-colonial discourse. The external invaders and rulers are either inspired or strategically want to develop a self image that can contain them reacting in a specific martial pattern. Hensman Howard in his account "Afghan War of 1879-80" illustrates that, "Afghanistan is a nation of soldiers, every adult being (apart from any military training he may receive) a ready swordsman[29]

Rodenbough also comes with subjective interpretation of the ways of Pashtoons. In his mentioned account, he has presented an over simplified version of the ways of Pashtoon. He has observed the ways of Pashtoon through a tunnel vision.

*"These feuds are a system of petty warfare, carried on by long shots, stealing cattle, and burning crops.*

*Samson, burning his neighbor's corn, acted just like an Afghan. When the harvest is nearly ripe, neither party dare sleep. The remedy is sometimes for both to fight until an equal number are killed on each side, when the neighbors step in and effect a reconciliation; another method is to pay forfeit of a feast and some sheep or cloth; in exceptional cases, a few Afghan virgins are substituted for the sheep, but they are given in marriage, and are well treated"[30]*

### **Conclusion:**

Analysis of the memoirs, reports, diaries and other accounts produced by the Orientalists in the colonial period on the Pashtoon's history, culture and

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ethnography indicates that, the connotation and diction of the colonial and post-colonial writers has clear distinctions. Based on the peculiar political situation, the image of Pashtoon has been constructed and reflected in the works of the orientalist. In the result of study we can distribute these foreigners in four categories.

The initial category covers the orientalists who visited Afghan land as visitors, their work contain relatively much attributing characteristics. The second tier is an outcome of the closed cored policy that is mixed with sheer bitter memories of the two Anglo-Afghan wars. The third tier of forward Policy writers and reporters cater another version of reconciliation and civilization. The fourth stock consists of the administrative officers and ethnographers who came back to Pakistan after the partition of Indian subcontinent and wrote their works like Oalf Caroe and J. W. Spain.

The works of all these cadres was driven by the peculiar colonial policies and its connection to the Pashtoos specially and Afghans generally.

The orientalist's narratives of colonial period still echoes in the accent of political scientists, ethnographers, anthropologists and academicians. The stereotyping of an ethnic entity as cruel, rigid, uncivilized and mischievous in the colonial era has almost reproduced in that needs proper investigation and articulation for rationalizing the discourse.

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