

ORIENTAL COLLEGES OF KASHMIR UNIVERSITY & POST-GRADUATE DEPARTMENT OF PERSIAN

[An Inspection]

ORIENTALISM, MEANING & SCOPE:

Orientalism, as defined in the Encyclopaedia of Asian History, has traditionally been the name of the academic discipline that undertakes the study of non-western cultures by Europeans and more recently, by Americans. Currently Orientalism also designates the underlying attitudes and motivations of men and women who have pursued this avenue of research and the consequences, these attitudes and motivation have had on the discipline itself and on society in general.

Neither the West nor the Orient, explains Ziauddin Sardar in his book entitled Orientalism, are monolithic entities; both are complex, ambiguous and heterogeneous. The Orient consisted - and consists - of the great civilizations to the East of the West: Islam, China, India and Japan. Not only could the West not deny them a history, an established place in the scheme of things, but it also had to recognize their power and wealth. And it was their intellectual and military power and economic and cultural wealth that gave rise to Orientalism. As such, Orientalism is geographically bound - it grew out of the fact that the powerful civilizations of the East were a lure to the desires of Western Civilization; and the civilizations of the East did not immediately collapse at the onset of Western power. But the West itself was not always 'the West'. The notion of the West as a political entity dates to the sixteenth century. Before that there was Christendom. And it is in the encounters of Christendom and its closest neighbour, Islam, that the origins of Orientalism, and much of its history, can be traced.

Western civilization thus became the yardstick, as Christendom had been earlier, by which Oriental Cultures and Civilizations were measured. The conceptual category of 'the West' was pitted against the concept of the 'Orient' and the Orient came to signify all that the West was not and some of what the West actually desired.

West progresses and changes while the expectation is that the Orient remains unchanging in its adherence to tradition; and hence remains backward and buried in medieval history.

Orientalist scholarship had a particular stance on tradition. To begin with, it emphasized ancient over living tradition. It discovered the 'past' of the Orient, a past over which it had more authority and control than the indigenous people. Islamic law, which has a long history and tradition, for example, was not merely studied by Orientalists, they actually constructed it. Legal Orientalism presented Islamic law in an essentialist manner and used this strategy to argue that Muslims are basically conservative, tied to backward tradition and customs. In India, Orientalists did not only 'discover' the past, but constructed it in a specifically dualistic form, thus Muslim became foreigners who represented the inauthentic India while the authentic Hindus and their indigenous civilization had to suffer.

In more modern times, the white man becomes the god of the Scientific wonder and superior technology. The bearers of such advancement must be a thing of wonder for the unsophisticated. Hwang is subtly indicating the deep-rootedness of the Orientalist vision in the Western psyche. He is also indicating how it is constructed out of basic tenets of Western thought. Orientalism is not a construction from experience of the Orient. It is the fabrication of pre-existing Western ideas overwritten and imposed upon the Orient.

The Orient, as exemplified by its iconic women, is submissive – the only proper response to a 'god'. Orientalism justified both the exploitation of Asian people and their political subjugation. A world without the vision of Orient is too awful a place to contemplate.

Religious mission was not only the catalyst for involvement in Asian cultures. Trade and empire building both encouraged the acquisition of linguistic skills and any other practical tools needed to ensure the establishment of stable markets and secure colonies.

During the 18th and 19th centuries; at the same time that important roads into "the Orient" were being made in the name of religion, trade and empire, the growth of interest in non-Western Culture is increased in academic circles.

These centres of learning flourished and came out successful in producing eminent scholars of religious thought. They possessed expertise in sophisticated stream of education also and promoted Oriental learning on the globe within their reach. They helped promote in reforming the society as an ideal one.

ORIENTALISM IN KASHMIR, A SHORT HISTORY:

Kashmir was one of the important centres of Oriental Learning, Culture and Thought in Asia even 200 years ago. The Oriental institutions of Kashmir possessed exemplary excellence and was so important and famous in Asian Countries that scholars from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq used to travel to Kashmir for gaining high standard lessons in teaching and research from these great centres of learning.

Initially, the centres of Islamic and Oriental studies were the mosques. Later the Oriental colleges came into existence. Its separate and independent establishments spread throughout the Islamic world and were recognised as renowned centres of learning and gained excellence in the promotion of Oriental knowledge.

Nizamul Mulk of Toos, Iran (d.485 A.H.), the Prime Minister during the empire of Saljuq dynasty for a period of thirty years, had a great desire to promote Oriental learning where ever or whenever possible and practicable. He established Oriental colleges in the cities of Nishapur, Balkh, Heart, Khawaf, Marv, Isfahan, Basra and Mosal. The most important and largest among these, was the Oriental college of Baghdad, which was established in the ear 457 A.H. The colleges got popularity with the name of **Nizamia Stream of Education.**

The religious centres and monasteries of Kashmir also used to serve as teaching institutions. It is a matter of pride for Kashmir that there existed distinctive centres of knowledge and learning in ancient times also.

The scholars of Kashmir, during the reigns of the Budhists and the Hindus were possessed of gifted divine vision and intellect. As a result they had left behind such high standard works of wisdom and literature that the people of neighbouring countries believed and accepted Kashmir as the seat of goddess of learning, "Saraswati".

Abu Rehan Alberuni (d.440 A.H.), an Arab traveller and distinguished scholar, when visited Kashmir with Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi, was astonished to observe the literary environment of Kashmir and gave his honest and real note in his travel book entitled Tahqeeq Ma-Alhind, that "there are only two most important Centres of Learning in India i.e. Varanasi and Kashmir". He did explore that the Vedas were first of all brought in the shape of written scriptures by the Pandits of Kashmir. Prior to this, the Vedas were preserved in the hearts and memories of great Pandits who used to transfer them to the later generations.

As the Islamic literature spread in Kashmir under the patronage of religion, the Sanskrit and Buddhist literatures also got a deep root during the Hindu Rajas and Buddhist Kings like Emperor Ashok and Kanisk. After the defeat of the Buddhist King, the Hindu Rajas patronised the promotion of Hindu philosophy and thought.

It was Hazrat Mir Syed Ali Hamadani, who first of all, took a successful lead in the promotion and spread of Islamic Faith and Culture in the Kashmir valley in true sense of the term and in a well arranged mission. For this purpose, he brought with him hundreds of Islamic scholars and Sufees from Central Asian countries and subsequently brought about a significant change in the faith and culture of Kashmir's every nook and corner.

Hazrat Mir Syed Ali Hamadani started his mission of Cultural and Literary transformation during the reign of Sultan Qotbuddin (1373-1389 A.D.). The Shaikh, alongwith the Islamic faith, gave special attention to the Arabic religious and philosophical education as well as Islamic Culture also.

All of the scholars and Sufees of his mission were engaged in performing their assigned task in certain institutions, besides their residences were also the places where persons got preachings. Moreover, there were three important Madrasas (Colleges) during this period. They are :- (1) Madrasa Sultan Qotbuddin, near present Fatah Kadal in Srinagar. The founder principal of this college was Haji Mohammad Qari with the world renowned scholars as its teaching staff. (2) This Sultan had also got another institution for religious learning named Madrasat-ul-Quraan, which was managed by Abul Mashaekh Shaikh Sulaiman and (3) Madrasa Orwatul Wuthqa - was also founded by Hazrat Shaikh Jamaluddin Mohaddith during the reign of Sultan Qotbuddin.

All the above named three institutions of learning were more standardized and upgraded than the universities. But due to the short-sightedness of the non-Muslim rulers these institutions were forcibly closed for ever. They were also ignorant from the value and essentiality of education.

Sultan Sikander, after the death of his father Qotbuddin, was seated on the throne in 1389 A.D. He also founded a Madrasa (College) in Nauhatta in Srinagar. Apart from religious teachings the urbane courses were also included in the syllabii.

Maulana Mohammad Afzal Bukhari, the Shaikh-ul-Islam, had also established an Oriental college in Naushahra, Srinagar.

Sultan Sikander was famous for his uprightness and Justice. He was a great patron of learning. Eminent scholars from Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria travelled to Kashmir and contributed to the spread and promotion of learning, specially Oriental during his regime.

Sultan Zainul Abidin alias Bud Shah (1419-1470 A.D.), famous for his secular approach in administration, established a university named after him as "Madrasa-i-Zain-ul-Abidin" at Naushahra, Srinagar, his capital city. This institution served as a centre of Arabic religious education and Islamic Culture and Thought. He also established a full fledged institution named "Darut Tarjama" (Institution of Translation) and collected thousands of manuscripts on any cost from Arabian countries and Iran. He endeavoured also to promote Kashmiri and Sanskrit languages alongwith Arabic and Persian. Many valuable titles of Sanskrit manuscripts were translated into Persian / Arabic and vice-versa.

Madrasa of Islamabad (Kashmir) was also a worth mentioning college. Gul Khatoon, the daughter-in-law of Zainul Abidin and wife of Haider Shah, had also established a magnificent college (Madrasa) at Pakhribal on the bank of famous Dal Lake. This Oriental College consisted of 360 rooms. This extremely beautiful and attractive place is very conducive to the teaching atmosphere and a suitable place for conducting research works. After 150 years, Dara Shikoh built a multi storied building near this college for discussions and dialogues among the scholars of different religions and for finding out a solution of unity among religions. The building was named after his wife named Nadira Begam alias Pari Begam as Pari Mahal.

The governments, after Zainul Abidin, stopped patronising these seats of learning mentioned above, neither they established any educational institution. But the religious scholars and Sufees continued to preach the masses at their residences and in the monasteries. Some such institutions are mentioned in the following.

1. The monastery (Khanqah) of Shaikh Ismail Kibrawi : The high profile religious leaders and Sufees were alive during the last period of Shahmiri dynasty and early Chak period. He had established two Khanqahs for the proper religious guidance of Muslims and keep the religion alive in the valley. The students from Khorasan and Iraq came for learning and the scholars visited the place in course of their research. The scholars were provided food, free of cost. A valuable collection of rare religious source materials were preserved here. These two Khanqahs, one adjacent to the present Jama Masjid and the other in the plain of Maran Mountain, were functioning till 1090 A.H.

Prior to the Khanqah of Shaikh Ismail, Khanqah-e-Moalla of Hazrat Amir-e-Kabir Hamadani, was the most important centre of religious learning and its promotion as well as Oriental education. It was demolished by Mir Shamsuddin Iraqi. After two years' wait for its reconstruction, Saleha Khatoon, wife of Sultan Mohammad Shah, took much pains, sold her jewellery etc and got the Khanqah of Hazrat Amir-e-Kabir constructed anew.

2. Madrasa Mulla Razi – Mulla Razi was a well known scholar and an enlightened teacher of the University of Sultan Qotbuddin. During the political upheavals, he started a Madrasa at his residence.
3. Madrasa Mulla Hafiz Baseer – He was a born blind scholar with praise worthy vision in Oriental learning and an authority in this field. His residence was an institution. The renowned scholars of the period called on him for acquisition of knowledge.
4. University of Husain Shah Chak – Chak ruler Ghazi Khan's son Husain Khan had established a University. To avoid the enemical strategies of Mir Shamsuddin Iraqi and threat to his life, he migrated to Siyalkot and started his teaching works there. After that, his two sons-in-laws, Mulla Kamaluddin (Teacher of Mojaddid Alf Thani Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi and Maulana Abdul Hakim Siyalkoti.) and Mulla Jamaluddin, bore the entire responsibilities of establishment as well as other expenditures and got the University functioned for a very long period.

Sultan Mohiuddin Aurangzeb's reign was different from his ancestors. Besides building mosques in Kashmir, he did a commendable service for promotion of learning and reformation as well as betterment of society.

The Moghal rulers did not establish any educational institution but revived the jagirs to the Khanqahs which were seized by the Chak Amirs and Sultans. Thus the real functioning of the Khanqahs were indirectly supported by them.

5. Darsgah-e-Mulla Haider – Mulla Haider Charkhi, a disciple of Shaikh Abdul Haq Mohaddith Dehlavi, established an institution of Oriental studies at Gajwarah (Srinagar) during the reign of Emperor Jahangir, son of Emperor Akbar, the great. It functioned very well for a long time and after his death his son acted as its patron.
6. Madrasa Syed Mansoor – It came into existence in the year 1125AH/1713AD. Enayatullah Khan, the Moghal Subedar of Kashmir was its patron.
7. Madrasa Fazil Khan – Fazil Khan was famous for his works of public welfare, bringing up the farmers and patronage of education. He constructed monasteries in Hasan Abad and Jogi Langar and a Madrasa adjacent to the new stone mosque.
8. Khanqah Shamsi Chak – This Khanqah served as a centre, for educating the persons hankering after acquiring religious knowledge and training, since the last days of Shahmiri period.
9. Khanqah Mir Syed Ali Hamadani – This Khanqah regained its lost glory during the Moghal regime. The outstanding scholars engaged themselves in teaching while the men of letters devoted themselves to research and writing authentic and high standard books on theology and other branches of learning.
10. Khanqah-e-Malik Jalal – This Khanqah of Malik Jalaluddin also served as a seat of learning.
11. Khanqah-e-Naqshbandiya – The Khanqah of Hazrat Khwaja Khawand Mahmood Naqshbandi was very much distinct for its educational and sermonizing programmes during the reigns of Emperor Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. Fatawai Naqshbandia, a famous title on Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence), was compiled by the great and famous luminaries of that time here only.
12. Madrasa Mulla Obaidullah – Mulla Obaidullah was an unparalleled scholar of Kashmir. Farrukh Sear, has engaged him for translation of Fatawa-i-Alamgiri into Persian. Persons having thirst for knowledge used to assemble here from far off places and after completion of courses shined like the sun and the moon in the sublime literary horizon. Days and nights together Mulla Obaidullah was dedicated to academic works and literary pursuits of excellence.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

This was a brief but clear introduction of the academic environment of Kashmir State, where the Oriental Studies flourished during different periods of history. The above mentioned centres not only served as centres of religious learning and spiritual enlightenment rather instructions in all the prevalent streams of knowledge like Jurisprudence, Law, Philosophy, Logic, Economics, Political Science, Astronomy, Astrology, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Algebra, Geometry, History, Ethics and Moral Science, the Art of living, Physiological & Social Sciences, Medical Science, Arabic and Persian Language and Literature, both prose and poetry along with all its genres, Prosody, Rhetorics, Grammar, Eloquence training, Calligraphy, Hifz (getting the Holy Quraan by heart and its recitation), Qerat, Tafseer and Hadith etc etc were imparted there. In short all those disciplines and branches of learning that were needed in this transitory world and during the life hereafter, were taught in these institutions. Most of the brilliant scholars after obtaining the degrees engaged themselves in teaching works and in the furtherance of knowledge. These Oriental centres of learning produced ideal citizen who craved for the betterment of society.

Now, I would like to present my humble opinion hereunder in this regard:-

- (1) There are many Centres and Institutions of Oriental Studies functioning very well even today in the Kashmir Valley. The sole purpose, of nurturing the rising younger generation in these institutions, is to produce Exemplary Citizen who may prove themselves useful for the society in all respects. The products of these Oriental Centres of Learning, as surmised and desired, would help promote in the creation of an Ideal Society and a better world which is very essential and urgently needed at global level during present times.

This paramount objective, evidently may not be achieved from the Modern University System of Education, it is the hard reality which we all feel and observe today. The University Grants Commission, in view of the essentiality to promote Moral and Ethical Education, has advised all the Universities of the country to include Moral Education in the syllabi in each of the subject of all the disciplines, may it be Arts, Humanities, Social Science, Pure Science, Education, Law, Engineering, Medicine and all Technical or Professional courses of studies.

This fact, that Persian Literature contains the biggest treasure of Moral and Ethical lessons, is undeniable. Persian Language and Literature together with Arabic and Sanskrit come under the purview of Oriental Learning. Realizing the importance and practicability of Persian, the super most power of today's world i.e. U.S.A. also has established many centres of Persian in its Universities, while U.K., Germany and other European countries have already been providing admirable facilities for Persian and Arabic teaching and research since long.

- (2) Apart from the Moral and Ethical Literature available in abundance in Persian it also contains rare works on History and Culture of around 700 years of medieval Indian Society. Without the knowledge of Persian, and to some extent of Arabic, one can not achieve first hand information of our own history of this long period. Besides these, Persian and Arabic manuscripts preserved in Oriental Libraries, millions of Persian and Arabic inscriptions and calligraphical specimen on buildings and other places are found in every nook and corner of the country. Those are rare works for the study by the Archaeological Survey of India. Here also the knowledge of Persian and Arabic is the only help to decipher them and add an extraordinary information to Indian History. Hence, to safeguard the Indian Cultural Heritage, Persian's knowledge is the only solution.
- (3) The utility and demand of young persons, having fluency in Spoken Modern Persian Language, translation of spoken and written documents of other languages into Persian and vice-versa as well as interpretation, have been justifiably stated in succeeding pages.

These are the facts, because of which the government should expend extravagantly on the promotion of Persian Learning and broadly on Oriental Studies.

INSPECTION REPORT:-

(A) ORIENTAL COLLEGES OF KASHMIR

Prof. M. M. Masoodi, Co-Ordinator, Innovative Programme & Head of the Department of Persian, University of Kashmir, entrusted me with the responsibilities of inspection of six Oriental Colleges situated in and around Srinagar, and also the Departments of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit of the University of Kashmir, Srinagar.

I complied to the inspection works as per schedule given below :-

- (i) **Jamia Madinatul Oloom, Hazratbal, Srinagar.** On 22.10.2008, I started the inspection and visited the above Oriental College. The college imparts instruction upto M.A. level. It has no sufficient building.

The work of construction is 25% complete.

There is no full time teacher either of Persian or of English language.

The library does not cater to the needs of students.

The members of the teaching staff are qualified. There is a sufficient piece of land for play ground.

- (ii) **Oriental College, Rajouri Kadal, Srinagar.** On the same day, in the afternoon, inspection of above college was made. There are sufficient number of class rooms and a good library. It preserves some rare manuscripts of Arabic & Persian. Land is there for construction of exam. hall and play ground. The management of college is satisfactory. It also does not have provision of teaching Persian and English subjects.

- (iii) **Jamaatul Banat, Umar Colony, B, Lal Bazar, Srinagar.** On 23.11.2008, I visited the above girl's college of Oriental learning. Housed in a magnificent double storied building, the college has sufficient infra-structure. English and Persian are taught with Oriental Curriculum. The neat and clean campus is praise-worthy. There is a provision of all round safety measures. The administration of the college deserve appreciation.

Admissions are made on payment, together with monthly tuition fee and hostel charges. It is unlike other Oriental Colleges where education is free from any financial burden on students. If the administration of the college plans and make 50% admissions free of any fee, the needy as well as meritorious girls may get benefit out of this model institution's teaching. There is a good library and also a playground for the girls. Besides, Computer training is also compulsory.

- (iv) **Darul Uloom Hanfia Arabic College, Noor Bagh, Srinagar.** The inspection of the above college was done in the afternoon of 23rd Nov. 2008. The college has sufficient class rooms but no exam hall. There is a piece of land for expansion of building. The library has sufficient stock of reading materials for the students and teachers. It lacks teachers for English and Persian languages. The present members of teaching staff are well qualified. The administration of the college deserve our admiration.
- (v) **Howzah Babulelem, Shariefabad, Badgam.** This was the fifth Oriental College in the series of inspection, done on 25th Nov. 2008. Highly qualified teachers, almost all of them talk in Persian and a few in Arabic language also. Students are trained very well in all the disciplines. There is a good library but no computer and no playground. It needs an examination hall. The effects of Iranian way of living is very much visible and fascinating.
- (vi) **Islamia Oriental College, Tral, Kashmir.** The last college, we visited on 29th Nov. 2008. It has a big campus for construction of building like examination hall, reading room in the library and class rooms. The cluster of qualified teachers lacks Persian and English teacher. The college possesses sufficient land for playground. The hostel rooms do not cater to the actual needs. The administration of the college is very efficient and also devoted like their teaching staff.

All the above six Oriental Colleges require FUNDS for :-

- (a) Building Construction of exam hall and hostel rooms.
- (b) Purchase of books and journals.
- (c) Purchase of stationary.
- (d) Purchase of computer.
- (e) Installation of language labs.
- (f) Appointment of qualified teachers of Persian and English languages for educating Spoken Persian, Translation works, Interpretation etc. There is a great need of such trained young men in the Department of tourism, International trade markets, media, embassies and Archaeological survey of India, Ministry of Foreign Affairs etc.

N.B.:-As per my humble opinion, every Oriental College of Kashmir be inspected to find out their short-comings and suggest measures for their remedial. Secondly, Job aspirants are to be made aware of the job opportunities after learning the spoken language, translation and interpretation.

(B) POST-GRADUATE DEPARTMENT OF PERSIAN, UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

The status and performance of the Department, established in 1962, is praise-worthy. There is no Post-Graduate Department of Persian in any University of the Country which has so much number of students in M.A. (Post-Graduation) classes. No where the number exceeds twenty or so whereas here the number is 123 against the intake capacity of $50+50=100$. The three students have taken admissions on payment seats this year. It shows the popularity of the subject among students as well as the all round Praise-worthy performance of the members of the teaching staff and lower staff of the Department. Credit goes to the **hero of the drama**, the Head of the Department **Prof. M. M. Masoodi**.

The second distinctive feature of the Department is that the teachers, not only impart instructions in Persian, rather they always talk in Persian only.

All the rooms of the Department are neat and clean and aesthetically furnished. The well equipped Departmental library has two sections and due to paucity of rooms, only these two rooms serve both the purposes of reading space and books almirahs. One section is named as "Maulana Rumi Research Library".

In addition to M.A., M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes there are two professional courses functioning:-

- (1) Certificate Course in Modern Spoken Persian and
- (2) P.G. Diploma in Persian.
- (3) There is a computer lab for Persian language learning.
- (4) A newly furnished Language Lab is in the process of functioning.

The Head of the Department and Co-Ordinator, Innovative Programme, Prof. M. M. Masoodi is a visionary and hard-working person as well as a reputed scholar of Persian Language, Literature and Iranian Culture. Over and above, Prof. Masoodi possesses a note-worthy administrative acumen. Hence the environment of the department is congenial. Besides teachers, the ministerial staff are all dedicated to the cause of the development of the Department. The Head of the Department, plans to start some more Professional Courses such as:-

- (i & ii) Certificate and Diploma Courses in Translation and Interpretation,
- (iii) Diploma Course in Computer Application.
- (iv & v) Certificate and Diploma Courses in Manuscriptology,
- (vi & vii) Certificate and Diploma Courses in Calligraphy.
- (viii & ix) Certificate and Diploma Courses in Eloquution.

It is due to the dedication of the Head to the department and his administrative skill that the Department is rising very high and is distinct among other departments of the University.

An yearly journal entitled 'Danish' is published almost regularly. It maintains its high research standard and beautiful get up as well as fair and attractive printing.

The department needs sufficient FUNDS for introducing the above mentioned and other new courses successfully.

(C) POST-GRADUATE DEPARTMENTS OF ARABIC AND SANSKRIT

I could not spare sufficient times in these Departments. But I found that the over all functioning of these two departments is satisfactory. For the development of the departments and promotion of the two languages viz. Arabic and Sanskrit, I find it necessary and it seems justified that they also follow the foot prints of the department of Persian and promote these languages as far as possible.

(D) ENGAGING POST-GRADUATE CLASSES

In addition to the Inspection visits stated above, I regularly engaged classes of Post-Graduate students. I delivered lectures on :-

- (a) The Ancient History and Culture of Iran before the advent of Islam there.
- (b) Literary History of Persian Literature and
- (c) Styles of composing verses (Sabks) and specially the Indian style (Sabk-e-Hindi). These topics were elaborately discussed during the lectures with the full satisfaction of the students.

(E) SIGHT-SEEING PROGRAMME

The Co-Ordinator of Innovative programme, Prof. M. M. Masoodi was kind enough to arrange for my sight-seeing trips of historical importance and of tourist interest on many days. I enjoyed very much. These interesting as well as most fascinating trips would always be remembered.

I am highly thankful to **Prof. M. M. Masoodi** for his hospitality such as boarding, meals, transportations etc provided to me during the whole period of my stay in Kashmir. It was really to my full satisfaction and all types of comforts.



[Prof.(Capt.)Dr.M.Sharaf-e-Alam]

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