

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Exploration of Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* as an Orientalist Discourse**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Arts in English**

**By**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Mr. Basu Dev Ghimire has completed his thesis entitled "Exploration of in Mangham's *The Razor's Edge* as an Orientalist Discourse" under my supervision. He carried out his research from July 2009 to June 2010. I hereby recommend that his thesis should be submitted for viva voce.

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The thesis entitled, "Exploration of Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* an Orientalist Discourse" submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U., Kirtipur by Basu Dev Ghimire has been approved by the undersigned members of research committee.

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## Abstract

This research presents the exploration of the Orientalist discourse in William Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*. In the novel, the narrator and the writer, Maugham tries to describe about the Hindu religion through the spokesperson Larry Darrell. Larry goes to India for spiritual search being fade up with American materialistic orientation. His friend Patsy's death in the First World War diverts him from materialism to spiritualism. But everywhere, mostly in India he presents himself as superior and others as subordinate to him. Though he claims to get illumination from his spiritual search, he returns to America where capitalistic society compels him to work. Other characters like Eliotte says that English people are the greatest people and Isabel also supports him saying they are the greatest and most powerful people in the world. Gray tries to know about the tigers, leopards and other exotic things of the Eastern world which is imprinted in the Orientalist thinker's mind. All these attitude and thinking pattern has given the points for exploration of the Orientalist discourse in *The Razor's Edge*. The textual analysis has clarified the claim made by the researcher that can be seen as the outcome of the colonial mentality and in broader sense Oriental discourse which was created to get power to show the Oriant and Oriental people inferior.

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## Maugham and Colonial Mentality

The present research is an inquiry on William Somerset Maugham's representation of the 'Orient' in comparison to the 'Occident'. Maugham's representation seems misrepresentation because he makes the reader see the 'Orient' as an spiritual place and a place of fun and hunting by employing the characters like Larry Darrel, Gray Maturing and Isabel as his spokespersons. Though Maugham tries to conceal his negative attitude towards the 'Orient' and 'Oriental people'; implicitly he fulfills his politics of showing the othered culture and civilization inferior in comparison to his own. How much he seems to praise the oriental religion and people, that much he criticizes it. Somerset is totally guided by colonial discourse which is formed by Britishers and other European people. The impact of colonial discourse makes him biased towards the orient especially to India in this novel. As other colonial writers, he becomes the victim of ghetto mentality, which favours western people and civilization as superior and the rest as inferior. Though Maugham is a character and narrator in the novel, he uses Larry Darrel as an agent of himself to show his negative attitude towards Indian culture, religion, people and civilization.

After encountering with the horror of the First World War where Larry had seen many of his close mates died, he decided to embrace a journey to India for spiritual quest. His search was parallel to the quest of Lord Buddha because he wants to discover meaning in life and in himself. In India, he stays for five years in meditation and studies where he visits a swami named Ramakrishna and under his guidance, he goes to many religious centers of India. As his search was spiritual, he desires to know the mysteries of life through spiritual way. In his visit to religious centers, he knows more deeply about Indian culture. He describes *yogi* of India as, "neither thin nor fat, palish brown [. . .] who [. . .] never wore anything but a loin

cloth” (Maugham 139). He describes Indian culture of worshipping sun god and river in the morning as, “I saw something, I could never have believed possible. I saw a thousand of people came down to take their lustural bath and pray” (243). When Larry Darrel talks with other characters like Gray and Isabel, they ask to Darrel “Did you have fun [. . .] and [. . .] shoot any tigers” (Maugham 136).

Maugham himself narrates the whole story as a character in the novel.

Anyway, we can say that Larry is the mouthpiece of Maugham. Maugham, the narrator in the novel, knows more about Larry’s visit of India when Larry talks with him in a hotel in France. Larry converses with him about Hindu religion and the people who follow the religion dogmatically. Though he seems to be impressed by Hinduism and oriental culture, he tells the faith of people in religion as groundless belief though it has done good to the people.

When Larry sees the bust of Brahma, Bishnu and Maheshwor or three headed god, he takes them as mysteries, which can not be understood. The Gods who are source of faith for Hindu people become unsolvable mysteries for him. At last, his spiritual quest becomes incomplete in India and he returns to Europe.

William Somerset Maugham, son of an English solicitor, was born in the British Embassy in Paris in January 25, 1874. He spent his early childhood in France learning France as his first language. After coming to England at the age of ten, he was educated at King’s school, Canterbury and Heidelberg University. In 1897 he received his M.D. from St. Thomas hospital and worked as doctor. His novels are written in a style highly idiomatic and fluent, revealing the qualities of simplicity, lucidity and euphony. He writes primarily of adult in conflict with one another and with social mores. He was one of the influential writers of twentieth century who



wrote many plays, short stories and other literary works. He died at the age of ninety-one on December 16, 1965 on Nice in France.

One of the most significant novels of Maugham is of *Human Bondage* (1915), that explores the ideas like truth, beauty, goodness. In the novel, the hero unconvincingly finds a good and sensible partnership at the end, but it is his hopeless possession for dreadful waitress Mildred, humiliating and inescapable, that remains long in the mind. The novel deals with the theme of frustration, hopelessness and passion.

*Liza of Lambeth* (1954) is another famous novel of Maugham which possesses a lightness of touch of the fiction of Guy de Maupassant and Maugham has acknowledged that the book was modeled after the straight forward, realistic manner of Maupassant and was influenced by the socially conscious plays of Henerik Ibsen. Most importantly, the novel presents an eloquent- if implied- picture of the need among the poor for birth control. In the novel, the scenes of slum life of poor people are vividly detailed. In another novel *The Narrow Corner* (1932), he approaches the topic of homosexuality, and a sexy tale of Indonesian shipping lanes.

Maugham was not only novelist, he has written many short stories and plays. In his play, *The Circle* that is a comedy of manner; he presents character of upper class society living according to social norms. The summing up is a collection of short stories, which is classified as autobiography but it is not conventional autobiography. This book largely represents an attempt to put in order his thoughts on subjects that had interested him during his life.

*The Razor's Edge*, published in 1944 mostly deals with Larry's quest for meaning in life and in the world. It presents the experience of an aviator of the First World War who visits India and examines Indian religious system, which was becoming popular in American and Europe on the contemporary period. In the novel

Maugham shows the conflict between materialistic life of American and European and quest for spirituality of an American named Larry Darrel in India. The novel also focuses the impact of World War and material orientation that the Great Depression of 1930s had imposed upon many people. It also shows the revolt of new generation against that material orientation. Larry, the protagonist of the novel becomes inspiring character for Beat Generation of 1960s who sought spiritual sufficiency in the lands of East.

In First World War, the protagonist Larry Darrel serves as a pilot in a fighter plane where he sees his closest friend killed. After returning from the war, he breaks his engagement with Isabel Bready and wants to discover the purpose of human existence and about the solution of evil and suffering in the world. His pursuit of answers to cosmic question leads him to India where he spends five years in meditation and studies. Then he returns to France where he meets Elliott Templeton, Isabel and her husband Gray Maturin. In France, he befriends Sophie Macdonald, an American nymphomaniac who arouses Larry's sympathy and it appears that the two will marry. Isabel, though she is married to Gray Maturin, interferes in Larry's relationship with Sophie who is found with her throat cut. Finally, Larry decides to leave Paris and plans to return to Chicago. He chooses some sort of manual work for his future because he sees no purpose in rejoining the materialistic world in which he was once a part.

*The Razor's Edge* has been able to attract the attention of many scholars and critics when it was published in 1944. Different critics have approached the text from various angles which have helped to bring forth the new ways in dealing and commenting on the novel, Kate O'Brien in *Spectator* writes:

This story for instance, is of a young American man, a brilliant air ace of 1914-18 war, who returns to Chicago to find that he can not live the life his rich friends and relatives have mapped out for him there; can not marry the nice girl he has long been in love with but cannot at first say more of what he really means than that he wants to “loaf”. He is in fact searching for the good life, the ideal of the saints. He sets out after it and the pattern of his search is most skillfully woven against the worldly design of the lives of his relations; they pursuing their supremely materialistic life in Chicago, London, Paris and the Riviera; he, crossing with them often, going his from Montparnasse to Belgian Coal mine thence via German farm and a Benedictine monastery to Hindu temple and hermitages of India. (356-357)

In O’ Berin’s view the novel is about the disastrous effect of First World War and people’s orientation in materialistic life. She further puts that the novel also presents the example like Larry Darrel who goes from Chicago to Paris, German and India in spiritual awakening.

Another critic Joseph Warren Beach in *New York Times* interprets the novel as:

Maugham’s central character is an American youth who as a flier in the first World War has looked on death and who gives up the life of love and money making for that of Hindu Vedanta and like Christian Wahnschaffe in Wassermann’s famous novel of ‘calmness’ forbearance, compassion, selflessness and continence’. But so long as he remains within the range of human visibility, the Indian saintliness of Larry Darrel stands in relief against the materialism and worldliness

of Elliot Templeton (Prince of Snobs), Gray Maturin (Financer), Isabel Bready and Sazana Rouvier (representing the female cult of social security), not to speak the Babylonish Frivolity and corruption whose name is Paris, in the delineation of which Maugham is such a past master. (352)

In Beach's opinion, the novel deals with the conflict between materialist way of life and spiritual way. He takes the novel as religious writing that focuses on the Hindu Vedanta and Christian religious belief and their impact on people in post-war scenario.

In *Nation* Dian Trilling remarks, "W. Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* is subtitled the story of man who founded a faith, but it is not a religious novel". She further says "It is not even a mystical novel, really despite the fact that one of its chief characters is the man who find faith, In India, in mystical worship of Absolute" (355).

A.L. Becker, another critic in *Style* writes:

[. . . ] This is like walking on the razor's edge. On one side there is trap: the impossibility of understanding cognitive phenomena if we assume a world of objects that inform us because there is no mechanism that makes that informational possible. On the other side there is another trap: the chaos and arbitrariness of non-objectivity where everything seems possible. We must learn to take middle road right on *The Razor's Edge*. (133)

A.L. Baker focuses on the significance of the title of the novel. For him, everybody has to take the middle path in life and he focuses on the chaos and arbitrariness of non-objectivity in human life cycle.

Cyril Connolly in *New Statesman and Nation* says; “This is a considerable addition to the literature of non attachment” (350). She further opines:

It ranks with Huxley’s *Grey Eminence* and *Heralds Man and Master* as powerful propaganda for the new faith or rather a new version of old faith, which is called by various names; neo-Brahmanism, or Vedanta of the west-and, which has made its home in somewhat macabre proximity to Hollywood. (358)

Connolly takes the novel as an important addition to the literature of non-attachment. He focuses on the point where new version of old faith is beautifully introduced in the novel.

In this way, the novel *The Razor’s Edge* has been analyzed from different perspectives. Some critics take the novel as a conflict between spirituality and materiality, as a religious novel, a novel of faith and takes the novel as literature of non-attachment, non-objectivity and historical novel which focuses on post-war scenario of 1920s. In this research work, the researcher has studied the presence of oriental discourse in Maugham’s *The Razor’s Edge*. Maugham himself, Larry and other characters are guided by oriental discourse that became fruitful to colonial expansion. So this research has studied the novel from the perspective of 'Orientalism'. Orientalism as a theoretical framework deals with Occidental representation politically, culturally, socially and psychologically, this research aims to introduce the colonial mentality of the writer towards the orient and oriental people. As nobody has analyzed the novel from the perspective of critique of Orientalism, this research will be important to dig out the hidden meaning and motives of writing and to give new life to the text.

This research work has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter includes the introduction of the text, problem that lies in the text, researcher's hypothesis, view on the text by other critics and researcher's point of departure. The second chapter discusses about the methodological tool, which the researcher uses in the research. The third chapter is all about textual analysis and the fourth chapter gives the conclusion of the research. Following the given format, this research work goes to its completion.

## II. Discourse on Orientalism

Edward Said, who was born in Jerusalem discusses the attitude of the western intellectuals towards the orient from the period of the Enlightenment, through the Nineteen century empire building and into modern foreign policy. Said takes 'Orientalism' as a discourse about the East, constructed by the West which has functioned as an instrument of power to support the colonialism. Orientalist writers divided the world into the orient and the occident in order to make essential statements about it. Said in his book *Orientalism* writes:

By Orientalism I mean several things, all of them in my opinion, interdependent. The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about or researches the Orient and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist historian or philologist either in its specific or its general aspects is an Orientalist and what she or he does is Orientalism. (2)

For Said, professional Orientalism includes scholars in various discipline such as language history and philology, but for him the discourse of Orientalism was much more widespread and endemic in European thought. He takes every kind of writing about the orient under the topic Orientalism.

The politics of dividing the world into the orient and the occident has great impact upon the concept of Orientalism. Said further writes:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and most of the time the Occident. Thus a very larger mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelist philosophers, political theorist, economist and

imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between the East and the West as the starting point for elaborated theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, custom mind and so on. (2-3)

Orientalism led the west to see the oriental culture as static both in time and place, as eternal, uniform and incapable of defining itself. This gave Europe a sense of its own cultural and intellectual superiority. The occident saw itself as dynamic, innovative and expanding culture. The West defined itself in comparison to the East. There created a long history of intellectuals who believed on the stereotyped representation and continued to present the orient in the negative light on the basis of the history.

Said in his book *Orientalism* views Orientalism as:

[. . .] the corporate institutions for dealing with the orient dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring as having authority over the orient. (3)

Said's main focus is specifically and almost exclusively on the Arab-Muslim middle East which he presumably considers a representative case study illustrative of the situation throughout Asia. The orient was defined as a place isolated from the main stream of human progress in science, arts and commerce.

The western scholars furnished an orient that was immobile, supine exotic, in short, ripe for possession and which possession would only improve. And the scholars version became canonical, so that Europe knew only the Arabs in the texts, and nothing of what Arabs really were. The West thinks they can not represent themselves; they must be represented. Said attacks the so-called objectivity of



knowledge by arguing that no production of knowledge in human science can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances. There were cultural values and political premises buried even in the terms of the philologists. Said says:

I believe it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within the culture that which is commonly circulated by it is not truth but representation [. . .] the value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statements about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such [. . .] the things to look at are style, figures of speech settling narrative devices historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original. (13-16)

It means the "objectivity" is confounded by the impurities of the scholars life in the world. Said, here, focuses on the link between the text and its author and authors' representation of something as a reflection of implicit concept of mind.

In his monumental book *Orientalism*, Said is asking the academies, policy makers and other American intellectuals recognize and redress long standing and arguably systematic bias against the Arabs. Orientalism derives largely from Said's sense of injustices perpetrated on Palestinian people, an awareness so intense that the author has little time to find or discern positive dimension or sides to Orientalism or even individual Orientalists who do not fit his definition of the biased scholars.

Said states in his book *Orientalism* that:

Orientalism . . . is an airy European fantasy about the Orient but a created body of theory and practice in which for many generation, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued

investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering the Orient into western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied indeed made truly productive the statement proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture. (6)

He thinks oriental stereotypes are the outcome of the chain of intellectuals who wrote, researched, talked, viewed and visited the orient.

### **Orient as a European Invention**

Orientalism is important in the sense that this is the mode of knowing "the other". Said takes Orientalism as a European invention which helped the Occident to legalize their colonial expansion. In the introductory part of his book *Orientalism*, he says that, "the Orient was almost European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes and remarkable experience" (4). The orient is one of the West's recurring images of the other which is the place of Europe's greatest richest, oldest colonies, its source of civilization and languages, and its cultural contestant. The orient is also a place which helped to define the west in its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience. According to Said, the orient is not only imaginative, it is an integral part of European material civilization and culture.

Said argues in the book *Culture and Imperialism*:

Under the general heading of the knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in

anthropological, biological linguistic, racial and historical these about mankind and the universe for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character. (17)

The main issue of Edward said is that Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality, an Oriental world emerged, first according to detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but a battery of desires, repression, investments and projections. The Orient was orientalized not only because it was to be 'Oriental' in all those ways considered common place by an average nineteenth century European, but also because it could be that is, submitted to being made Oriental.

Said is of the view that the Orient is not simply there, it is an idea that has a history and tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it vengality and presence in and for the west. 'The Orient' and 'the Occident' as two geographical entities support and reflect each other. Thus, the Orient was created or ritualized through the power relationship between the Occident and the Orient. The relationship is that of power of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony. The Orient was orientalized not only because it was discovered to be Orient but also because it could be made Orient.

### **Nexus between Text, Knowledge and Power in Orientalist Writing**

Orientalist writers and intellectuals generated numerous texts about the Orient which helped westerners to get knowledge about the East. Later, during colonial expansion they used that knowledge about the Orient as a surest weapon to fulfill their colonial mission. For the colonialist, to have knowledge about the Orient is to dominate it, to have authority over it. Westerners knowledge about the East was a

power for them which is obtained from the Oriental text. So there is close connection between the text, knowledge and power. European view the texts about the Orient as a power.

Leela Gandhi in her book *Postcolonial Theory* writes:

Strictly speaking Orientalism designates the pioneering efforts of Eighteen century scholars and enthusiasts of Oriental culture such as William Jones Henry T. Colebrook and Charles Wilkins who undertook the first translation of texts like the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Shakuntala* and portions of *Upanishads*. Said is more liberal in his view that 'Orientalism' includes the activity of any professional Western Academic-historian, sociologist, anthropologist, area studies expert or philologist currently or previously engaged in studying, researching and teaching the Orient. Second, he abandons the disciplinary confines of Orientalist tradition to argue, rather expansively, that Orientalism also refer to any and every, occasion when a westerner has either imagined or written about the non-western world. (76)

So, Orientalism becomes an imaginative cast of mind or style of thought or any written text which worked as a form of power and covers roughly two millennia of Western consciousness about the East. By this reasoning, Homer, Aeschylus Dante are all rebaptised as Orientalist.

Ellek Boehmer in his book *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* presents that texts about the non-western countries have great influence on colonial legitimacy which became a form of weapon for Orientalist intellectuals. He writes:

In late Eighteenth century British India, in the transcription of Islamic Sharia and Hindu shastras, writing served also as an instrument of rule, as a means of collecting information and exercising power. The blending of ancient religious laws and what was seen as modern scientific knowledge was taken to be the most effective way of administrating India. (13)

Boehmer's point is that colonial ruler, first tried to understand the literary texts, political treaties and religious writings of the aboriginal people to form new Oriental text which gave native people the sense of inferiority. Native people easily came under the influence of these texts and accepted their stereotypical representation made by Westerners. He further writes:

From the early days of colonialization, therefore ,not only text in general but literature broadly defined, underpinned effort to interpret other lands, offering home audience a way of thinking about exploration, western conquest, national velour, new colonial acquisitions . . . Empires were of course as powerfully shaped by Military conflict, the unprecedented displacement of people, and the quest for profit. Yet it is also true that Spanish Portuguese, and later Dutch, British and French hegemony was affirmed, under written, and justified in myriad forms of pageantry and symbolic display. As well as oral communication (word of mouth, tall tale and numour), literature created channels for the exchange of colonial images and ideals. In writing as various as romances, memoirs, adventure tales, or the later poetry of Tennyson, the view of the world as directed from colonial metropolis was consolidated and confirmed. (14)

Literature in broader sense has created channels of exchange of colonial images and stereotypes which formed a typical representation of the Oriental culture, people and civilization.

But Homi K. Bhabha, in *National and Narration* argues that the negative Orientalists stereotype is an unstable category which makes the conceptual limit of colonial presence and identity. It is fundamentally threatening as the banished or underground 'other of the European self, and insofar as it embodies the contradictory expulsion of colonial fantasy and phobia, it actualizes a potentially disruptive site of pleasure and anxiety. In Bhabha's words:

Stereotyping is not only the setting up to the false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjections, metaphoric and metonymic, strategies, displacement, guilt, aggressively, the masking and splitting of official and fantastic knowledge's . . . (169)

Bhabha sees stereotyping in the broader sense because it not only includes the false representative images of the Orient but also encompasses the quality of ambivalence in the text. Bhabha is of the view that Orientalist discourse was strategically available not only to the empire but also to its antagonists.

The connection between the text, knowledge and power can be viewed clearly through the concept of a post-structuralist critic Michel Foucault. He has developed a theory of discourse in relation to power structures which are practiced in the society. Foucault's main concern is that discourse has close connection with the power. He views that the discourses that are widely used in the society and social institutions generate certain power which might be social, ethnical, or political. Such discourses help to implement the power into the society. The discourse, therefore, is inseparable

from its link with power because it is operating factor which limits and governs every socio-political institutions. In an interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, Foucault Says:

I believe that around the sordid affair which had long remained buried and carefully hidden a whole number of interesting questions were provoked. These can all be summed up in two words: Power and Knowledge . . . concerning sciences like theoretical physics or organic chemistry, one poses the problem of its relations with the political and economical structure of society. (*The Foucault Reader* 51)

The discursive formation has enabled institutions to use power to dominate by defining and excluding it from the mainstream. Discourses, according to Foucault, are produced in which concept of madness; criminality, sexual abnormality and so on are defined in relation to sanity, justice and sexual normality. His point, here, is the meaning of discourse depends on its controlling factors because discourse is not free from embedded power in it.

No discourse could escape from the network in which power politics governs all other components. Power is not hierarchical flowing from top to bottom and is not used vertically to dominate the other. Foucault, in *History of Sexuality*, writes about the all pervasive nature of power as:

Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere. Power comes from below, that is there is no binary and all encompassing opposition between ruler and ruled at the root of power relation. (93)

Foucault's concept about power clarifies the broadened criteria where he not only takes power as domination but takes it in positive light.

Bringing Foucault's concept of knowledge and power, Said observes how the western intelligentsias and authorities associate their knowing of the Orient with their legitimate right to govern it. In his book *Orientalism*, he brings the example of Arthur James Balfour who once said "Who know that civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back, we know it more intimately. We know more about it" (32). Two great themes this remark contains are knowledge and power when Balfour justifies the necessity of British occupation in Egypt, the most dominant aspect of his justification is associated with 'our' knowledge of Egypt, and not military or economic power. Knowledge, for Balfour, means surveying a civilization from its origins to its prime to its decline. For him, to have such knowledge of such thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. In short, Balfour's logic is, "England knows Egypt, Egypt is what England knows England knows that Egypt cannot have self government. England confirms that by occupying Egypt; for Egyptian; Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs" (*Orientalism* 34).

Regarding the link between Foucauldian concept and Orientalism Leela Gandhi in her book *Postcolonial Theory* writes.

Orientalism, the question of Palestine and covering Islam each extends Foucault's paradigmatic account of the alliance between power and knowledge to colonial conditions. Foucault, as we have seen explores the contiguity of power and knowledge in order to explicate the ways in which knowledge transforms power, changing it from monolithic apparatus accumulated within the state into a web like force which is confirmed and articulated through the everyday exchanges of 'Know how' or information which animates social life. (74)



The relation of knowledge can not be separated from power because both parallelly exist in the text. In joint collaboration of knowledge and power, truth is created and that truth leads society further under its limitation. Another critic Friedrich Nietzsche views that every action of an individual is guided by "a will to power". He views power as a controlling factor in the world. He further writes, "The only thing that all men want is power and whatever is wanted is wanted for the sake of power. If something is wanted more than something else, it must represent power"(511). These lines establish the link between power and action and show that power is controlling factor for all institutions, culture, language, religion, civilization and so forth.

Prominent critic, Sneja Gunew writes that power "is represented in discursive network at every point where someone who "knows" is instructing someone who doesn't know" (22). While Said listens carefully to Foucault's influential account of power, he is ultimately more interested in question of knowledge or more specifically in exploring and critiquing the conditions under which knowledge might be transformed and vitiated through the contagion of power. Here, Said seems to invoke the anarchist maxim that power is especially the creator of so called truth and that truth works as a surest weapon in reaction to colonial culture.

To sum up, the Orientalist texts cannot incorporate the realities of Oriental countries, and the activities and sensibilities of the Oriental people. The texts are guided by will to power, which makes them biased.

### **Orientalism: Latent and Manifest Forms**

To discuss about the topics 'Latent' and 'Manifest Orientalism', Said borrows the concept of Sigmund Freud. His discussion about the topic is guided by Freudian concept of conscious and unconscious psyche. Said's discussion regarding Latent and Manifest Orientalism helps to analyze any text vividly through the eyes of the theory, critique of Orientalism.

Said defines Latent Orientalism as an almost unconscious and certainly an untouchable positivity and Manifest Orientalism as the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, sociology and so forth. He views that whatever changes occur in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism, whereas the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant.

Said says both form of Orientalism are outcome of "around 60000 books dealing with the Near Orient . . . written between 1800 and 1950" (204). In the nineteenth century writers, for example, the differences in their ideas about the Orient can be characterized as exclusively manifest differences, differences in forms and personal styles rarely in basic content. Said writes:

Everyone of them kept intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its famine penetrability, its supine malleability, this is way every writer on Orient from Renan to Marx (ideologically speaking) or from the most rigorous scholars (Lane and Sacy) to the most powerful imaginations (Flaubert and Nerval), saw the Orient as a locale requiring western attention, reconstruction, even redemption. The Orient existed as a

place isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts, and commerce. Thus whatever good or bad values were imputed to the Orient appeared to be functions of some highly specialized western interest in the Orient. This was the situation from about the 1870s on through the early part of twentieth century.

*(Orientalism 206)*

Oriental backwardness, degeneracy and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with the ideas about biological bases of racial inequality. Along with all other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerated, uncivilized and retarded:

[T]he Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral political admonishment. The Orient was instance, women, the poor delinquents and lamentably alien. The Orientals were analyzed not as citizen or even people but as problem to be solved. (207)

Said is of the opinion that the fundamental change occurred in Orientalism is spatial and geo-graphical one. It does not change in its fundamental content. The centuries old designation of geographical space to the East of Europe is partly political, partly doctrinal, and partly imaginative. So, it does not imply any connection between actual experience of the Orient and knowledge of what Orient is. Said says, all the latent and unchanging characteristics of the Orient stood upon its geography. The geographical Orient nourished it's inhabitants granted their characteristics and defined their specificity. Orientalists tried to dignify this simple conquest by turning the appetite for more geographical space into a theory about special relationship between geography on the one hand and civilized or uncivilized people on the other.

Said's point is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine applied over the Orient which was weaker than the Occident.

There were two principal methods by which Orientalism defined the Orient to the west in the early twentieth century. One by means of the "disseminative capacities of modern learning, its diffusive apparatus in the learned professions, the universities, the professional societies, the exploration and geographical organizations and in publishing industries" (221).

All these, as we have seen built upon the prestigious authority of the pioneering scholars, travelers, and poets whose cumulative vision had shaped a quintessential Orient, the doctrinal-or-doxological-manifestation of such an Orient, for said, is latent Orientalism. So far as anyone was concerned, latent Orientalism supplied him with an enunciative capacity that could be used or rather mobilized, and turned into sensible discourse for the concrete occasion at hand. Transmitted from one generation to another, latent Orientalism was a part of the culture as much a language about a part of reality as geometry or physics. "Orientalism staked its existence, not upon its openness, its receptivity to the Orient, but rather on its internal repetitious consistency about its constitutive will to power over the Orient" (222). In such a way, Orientalism was able to survive revolutions, world wars and the literal dismemberment of empires.

The second method, Said says, was the result of an important convergence. When the Orientalist had spoken about the Orient, they had translated texts, they had explained civilizations, religions, dynasties, cultures, mentalities for decades. The Oriental experts job was to describe or interpret the Orient for his compatriots. Thus "the relationship between Orientalist and Orient was essentially hermeneutical" (*Orientalism* 222).

The Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object. Yet the Orientalist remained outside the Orient. Which, however, much it was made to appear intelligible remained beyond the Occident. This cultural temporal and geographical distance was expressed in the 'metaphors of depth secrecy, and sexual promise: phrases like' 'the veils of an Eastern bride' or 'inscrutable Orient' passed into the common language.

Edward said states in his book *Orientalism*:

As the commercial, political and other existential encounters between East and West increased, a tension developed between the dogmas of latent Orientalism, with its support in studies of the 'classical' Oriental, and the description of a present modern, manifest Orient articulated by travelers, pilgrims, statement and the like. At same moment impossible to determine precisely the tension caused a convergence of the two types of Orientalism. (222-223)

Said states that, the Orientalist could be regarded as the special agent of Western power as it attempted policy Vis-à-vis the Orient. Every learned European traveler in the Orient felt himself to be representative westerners who had gotten beneath the films of obscurity.

Although said limited his discussion to academic study of middle Eastern, African and Asian history and culture, he asserted that Orientalism is, and does not merely represent a significant dimension of modern political and intellectual culture. Taking a comparative and historical literary review of European, mainly British and French, scholars and writers looking at, thinking about, talking about and said sought to lay bare the relations of power between the colonizer and the colonized in those

texts. Said's writings have had far reaching implication beyond area studies in, to studies of imperialist western attitudes to, and elsewhere.

So, it seems fruitful to analyze the text, *The Razor's Edge* by applying the theoretical perspective, critique of Orientalism. As the text is one of the productions of the colonial mentality and Orientalist thinking, it embodies many issues which can be discussed under the perspective, critique of Orientalism. *The Razor's Edge* includes the protagonist's visit to India and his description of India and Indian culture and other characters' imaginative attitude towards India. So, the present researcher aims to dig out the hidden motives of the Orientalist writer Somerset Maugham through this research.

### III. Exploration of Orientalist Discourse in Maugham's *The Razors Edge*

The previous chapters discussed introduction and its critical overview of Orientalism by different critics with their perspective in accordance with post colonial context. Similarly, the present chapter explores the concept of Orientalism and its traits that open up as features in the eyes of Western scholars, critics, politics, culture and society amalgamate these concepts and apply them in the Oriental novel, *The Razor's Edge*.

Somerset Maugham, the narrator as well as character in the novel, shows the Orient and Oriental culture as a place and culture which has much more "exotic" things to attract and attach the western intellectuals. He attempts to appreciate the Hindu philosophy on the foundation of Larry's spiritual quest who starts his spiritual journey to India. He was brave enough to tackle a large and important theme: What is the ultimate truth of life and by what values do we live? Larry's pursuit of enlightenment is at the heart of these questions and Maugham, the narrator remarks in the novel that had it not been for the conversation he had with Larry about his spiritual experiences, he would not have thought it worthwhile to write the book. But in due course of narrating the events of the novel, he implicitly, in most of the places and explicitly in some places, shows his true nature of inferiorizing the Orient and the Oriental culture.

In some events of the novel, Maugham appreciates Hindu philosophy but his study about Hinduism seems shallow and imaginative like other Orientalist writers who described the East in the text on the basis of Westerner's text about the East and their imagination. For Maugham, Hindu Philosophy is like a mystery which is impossible to believe. He presents Hinduism's description being an all knowing narrator. In some

places, he takes other characters like Gray and Isabel's help to show the Western's attitude towards the East in general and towards India in particular.

It is no doubt that Maugham is highly impressed by the way Hindu people behave and celebrate their culture but he is biased in the representation of the Oriental ethos. As Foucault takes any discourse embedded with power, Maugham creates this novel as a part of chain in the pile of Orientalist text. He legalizes the claim of other Western intellectuals that the East is supine, exotic, instable, weak, uncivilized etc. His inspiration to write the novel, *The Razor's Edge* seems to come from his own visit to India in 1936. He had more interest in Indian religion and he travelled to India with the intention of meeting scholars, writers, artists, religious readers and devotees. He was particularly inspired by his meeting with one of the India's most revered saints who become the one character in the novel. The man's name was Ramana Maharshi, and lived in a hermitage at the foot of holy mountain Arunachal. Maugham sat in a hall with Maharshi's devotees as the holy man and meditated. At this time, he writes, "A little shiver seemed to pass through those present. The silence was intense and impressive. You felt that something strange was taking place that made you inclined to hold your breath"(266). Ramana Mahirshi became the model for Larry's spiritual teacher, Shri Ganesh, in *The Razor's Edge*. Indeed when Larry sits silently with Maugham in a café after Sophie's death and says "Shri Ganesh used to say that silence also is conversation" (266). Maugham, the author, is quoting the exact words Ramana Maharshi said to him on his visit. This shows that the novel contains some autobiographical elements in it, through which we come to learn that Larry Darrel is not a separate character but Maugham himself who acts as a spokesperson of him. Here, Larry and Maugham's visits of India are parallel where Larry practices the Oriental stereotypical representation which is the product of colonial Mentality.



Maugham is an Orientalist writer because his novel encompasses the description of the East. Edward said takes every one as the Orientalist who teaches, writes and researches the Orient. In *The Razor's Edge*, Maugham, mostly deals with the description of Hindu philosophy and Indian culture and religious practice which makes him Orientalist. In the novel, when one of the devotees of Hindu religion joins the hands to worship his God, Larry describes:

He joined the palms of his hand together and with just the indication of a how strolled on. I stayed looking at those three mysterious heads. Perhaps I was in the receptive mood. I was strongly stirred. You know how sometime you try to recall a name, it's on the tip of your tongue but you just can not get it that was the feeling I had then. (236)

These lines show that he describes the worshipping act of a devotee but through western perspective. The tree headed Gods who are the center of belief and dedication become "Mysterious heads" for him. Larry shows his ambivalent position of uncertainty only to be superior over them and only to take that cultural practice as Othered cultural practice.

In the course of reading the novel, frequent traits of Orientalism come throughout it. In the light of exotic representation of the Eastern people, culture and civilization by the novelist is explicit in the novel related with the concept coined by postcolonial theory. Exotic word was first used in 1599 to denote the meaning alien, introduced from aboard not indigenious, and in due course of time, its meaning had been broadened to include and exotic foreign territory, an exotic habit and domineer. The same word became a means to disassociate the East from the western mainstream culture, literature and civilization. Westerner viewed the East or the Orient as a place

which symbolizes the place defined for hunting and fun. In the novel, Gray Maturin and Isabel's conversation with Larry discloses the fact:

"Where have you come from now?"

"India."

"How long were you there?"

"Five years."

"Did you have fun?" Gray said. "Shoot any tigers !"

"No." Larry smiled.

"What on earth were you doing with yourself in India for five years?"

Said Isabel. (136)

As these extracted lines show that for the Westerners, the East in general and India in particular is a place for hunting and having fun. They also show that though Gray and Isabel haven't visited India but they have the imaginative concept of India which is the outcome of stereotypical representation of the East in the western texts. When Isabel says, "What on earth were you doing yourself in India for five years?" (136), It explicitly gives the hint that a westerner can do nothing in India than hunting tigers and making merry. The same saying advocates the feeling of superiority of the Westerners over the Easterners.

Said's concept of critique of Orientalism examines European's representation of the people, culture, religion and societies of the Orient. He claims that traditional Western scholars on the religion and literary depiction of the Orient have created stereotypes as its culture as irrational, unchangeable, violent and degenerated. Such stereotypes, once established, have colored subsequent representation of areas, so that imaginative writers, journalists and even scholars tend to ring their writing into live with preconceived notion of what the Orient is. In this way, Said asserts that negative

stereotypes of the region and its people have long been exploited to justify Westerner's economical and political domination of the Orient, and they continue to inform both popular attitudes and public policy towards the region.

In the novel *The Razor's Edge* also Maugham presents the Orient as the place which has spirituality as its other name. He takes America as a place of materialism where people are bound to work for their progress and fictionalizes the spirituality of the East. Maugham writes:

Mrs. Bready had high principles and common sense. Her common sense assured her that if you wanted to get on in this world, you must accept its conventions, and not to do what everybody else did clearly pointed to instability. Her high principles lead her to believe that a man's duty was to go and work in a business where by energy and imitative he had chance of earning enough money to keep his wife and family in accordance with the standards of his station, give his sons such an education as would enable them on reaching man's estate to make an honest living and on his death leave his widow adequately provided for. (77-78)

These extracted lines show the material Orientation of western people to get material pleasure and ecstasy. Mrs Bready, mother of Isabel accepts the engagement of Larry and Isabel but fears that Larry wouldn't be able to provide all material pleasure for her.

On the other hand, Eliotte Templmen who was not born rich but was successful as an art dealer, assiduously cultivates social relationships with high boons and loves the aristocratic social world of London and Paris. When he dies, he insists on being buried in the costume of Renaissance count to whom he claims as his

ancestor. He is the man with his snobbery and superficiality. The Maturins, on another side, are the embodiment of American prosperity. They are hard noses business man who knows how to make money. It would never occur to either of them the real purpose of life might be something other than the acquisition of wealth. Isabel is also materialistic and possessive. The reason, she denies to marry Larry is because he refuses to provide her, with material luxuries that she thinks are appropriate to her station in life. Isabel says:

Larry, if you hadn't a cent to your name and got a job that brought you three thousand a year, I would marry you without a minute's hesitation . . . But this means living in the sordid bEastly way all our lives with nothing to look forward to. It means I should be a drudge to the day of my life . . . A man ought to work. That's what he is here for. That's how he contributes to the welfare of the community. (64)

Material Orientation has been depicted in the novel as the western concern. Everyone is guided by the will of material possession. This shows the West as a place of importance where everyone is progress Oriented. They take themselves as developed and civilized. By linking themselves with material concern, they take their culture as superior culture.

In contrast to that, the East is a place of spirituality where the protagonist Larry wants to loaf. The East is taken as a place of loafing. When others ask Larry's Plan for further, he simply says, "I want to loaf" (36). Larry, an American, a product of materialistic society wants to get spiritual knowledge in the East but no one is depicted in the novel, who belongs to the East and wants to get material progress. Describing India as the place of spiritual concern only and America as a material world is a politics of othering the Orient. Larry Says, "I am on the threshold. I see vast

land of spirit stretching out before me beckoning. I'm eager to travel" (61). He wants to visit India to "make up . . . mind whether God is or God is not" (61). He selects Indian spiritual culture for his psychological research to find the answers of the questions which are tickling the mind of Larry. But Isabel represents European culture as superior. Though Larry has implicit notion of superiority in his mind, Isabel explicitly claims European culture as superior. She says, "We are the greatest, the most powerful people in the world. We are going forward by leaps and bounds. We have got everything . . . you have forgotten, you don't know how thrilling life is in America today (62)".

Isabel's statement of European as superior creature in the world implicitly inferiorizes other cultures of the world. For her, Europeans are only the civilized and guide for other uncivilized and ignorant people. Western superiority is throughoutly shown in the novel. It is the Anglo-Indian snobbery and their strategy of exclusion of the Indians that prevents them to be the master or instructor. Eliotte Templemen also claims in his conversation with Maugham that, "English are the greatest people" (75).

The exposition of the India in *The Razor's Edge* seems to be quite uncivilized and barbaric in general and but more specifically the spiritual and uncultured. Western intellectuals were habituated in demonstrating Hinduism in negative light which is no doubt an inferiorization of the Orient. The Oriental geography, people, culture and things related with it are the grounds which let Westerners to speak about it. This is the biased domain created by the West to undermine against the history and historical root of the Indian or the Eastern people. The authenticity lies in westerner's mouth and voice to legalize everything of the Eastern region of the globe. Religious concerns are highly attacked in the novel and Hindu religious practices have been

severely criticized. When Larry visits Beneras, he describes the act of worshipping sun God in the morning in negative light as:

I saw something, I could never have believed possible, I saw thousands upon thousands come down to take their lustral bath and pray. I saw one tall gaunt fellow, with a mass of tangled hair and a great ragged beard, with nothing but a jock-strap to cover his nakedness, stand with his long arms outstretched, his head up and in a loud voice pray to the rising sun. (237)

Certainly, everyone loves their own culture and becomes ready to die for it. But Larry in these lines discloses his inner psyche that they are good and Indian's are barbaric and dogmatic. His description of the person who was involved in the worship helps to view his negative attitude towards Indian people.

Larry presents himself in the novel as a person who has deep knowledge about Hinduism but his knowledge is shallow and is not authentic. This is shown in the following lines when he converses with the narrator and author Somerset Maugham:

All I know about Brahminism were those verses of Emerson's and I tried to remember them. It exasperated me that I couldn't and when I went back to Bombay I went into a book shop to see. If I could find a volume of poetry that had them in. They are in the Oxford Books of English verse. D'you remember them?

They reckon ill who live me out; When me they fly, I am the wing, I am the doubter and the doubt, And I the hymn the Brahmin Sings (238).

In this light, it becomes clear that the knowledge of Larry on Hinduism is shallow and the fact that westerners take written discourse to know about another culture. The same act of Westerner has created the stereotypical representation of the Orient.

Larry philosophizes the Hindu philosophy throughout the novel but in a conversation with Maugham, when he asks to Larry "do you in your heart of hearts believe in reincarnation", Larry answers:

That's very difficult question to answer. I don't think, its possible for us Occidentalists to believe in it as implicitly as these Orientals do. It is in their blood and bones. With us it only can be an opinion. I neither believe in it nor disbelieve in it. (240)

The fact also proves his superficial knowledge about Hindu philosophy and makes demarcation between Occident and the Orient.

Said takes Orientalism as a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and most of the time the Occident Maugham clearly divides the world into two parts: the Orient and the Occident in his novel *The Razor's Edge*. He makes differentiation between the thoughts of the Western and the Eastern stating that the thing which is possible for the Oriental people is impossible for the Westerner. Othering the Orient has played great role for the colonial expansion and became a tool for colonization.

Taking everything of India as strange mysterious, related to spirituality, impossible to believe etc. connotes the act of excluding the East. As Larry says:

I should like to tell you a very strange experience . . . I saw a long line of figures one behind the other. The foremost was an elderly lady in a lace cap with gray ringlets that hung down over her ears. She wore a tight black bodice and a black silk flounce skirt the sort of clothes, I

think they wore in the seventies, and she was standing full face to me in a gracious, different attitude, her arms hanging straight down her sides with the palms towards me . . . immediately behind her but sideways so that I saw his profile, with a great hooked nose and thick lips, was a tall gaunt Jew in a yellow gabardine with a yellow skullcap on his thick dark hair. (240)

His description is so mysterious that it helps to create hypnotic condition. Larry takes the Hindu practice of meditation as a mystical practice and India is the place for mystery, spirituality hypnotism and the like for him. He describes the Indians strongly in his first visit with them in Bombay. "What a conglomeration! Chinese, Mohammedans, Hindus, Tamils as black as your hat" (235). He further writes:

Men, women and children. The men striped to the waist, wore dothies, and their forehead and often their chest and arms were thickly smeared with the ash of burnt cowdung. You saw them making obeisance at one shrine and another and sometimes lying full length on the ground, face downward in the ritual attitude of 40 rostration . . . They called one another, greeted one another, quarreled with one another, heatedly argued with one another. There was an ungodly row, yet in some mysterious way god seemed to be near and living. (242)

To the English, the native Indians appear different and monstrous in comparison with them. For them India is an exotic, mysterious, traditional and backward space.

Westerners seem to generalize all the Indians as religious and nothing more. For Maugham, Indians are the people of distinct origin. Religious rites and believes are not easily comprehensible to the ordinary. Westerner has been taught to judge everything by the yard stick of common sense and reason. Even a well practiced ritual



of Hindu religion becomes the matter of mystery and offense for westerners. Places and temples of India which are shown in the novel symbolizes the wild, dirty, exotic in western gaze.

Western intellectuals and scholars have common with hind sight. We are able to see is that one way or the other they propounded the theme of incompatibility of the two culture for the obvious reason that the western culture inherently far more superior to the Eastern one. Maugham writes:

It was very dark there and silent white figure flitted to and fro. That wonderful day with the brilliant sunshine, the coloured, the noisy crows, the smell of the East, acrid and aromatic enchanted me, and like an object, a splash of colour that a haunter puts into pull his composition together, those three enormous heads of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva gave a mysterious significance to it all. I'd suddenly become a place aware of an intense conviction that India had something to give me that I had to have. (236-37)

Since antiquity, India for westerner became a place where they could have everything they wanted. They could get money, fun, sexual pleasure, rest, knowledge, satisfaction in the East. They are enchanted with "the smell of the East" (236), which motivated them to trap India as their colony. To fulfill their colonial mission over India, Orientalist writers went on depicting the references of religion, language and other customs of India in a derogatory way. They only sought for dark sides of Indian customs and religion ignoring the bright or positive aspects. The fact that depiction of India and Indian aspects almost in negative light there by supports the fact set forth at the beginning of the paper that the novel is an Orientalist writer composition that encodes Orientalist ethos.

In the novel, India is not only presented as the place of spirituality but also as a place of poverty. Maugham shows the poor image of India where people are accustomed to for their survival. Maugham writes:

You pass through long halls, the roof supported by sculptured columns, and at the feet of each column a religious mendicant is startled, offerings or a small mat on which the faithful now and again throw a copper coin. Some are clad some are almost naked. (242)

In these extracted lines Oriental people are shown miserable. Maugham doesn't see the devotion and respect of these people for their religion but only portrays them as they are seen outwardly. In another circumstance also, he takes India as a country where people neglect their material gain and only expect from other. While talking with one of his Indian friends of Madura city, Maugham narrates that conversation between Larry and his friend him as:

I asked him how he ate and how he slept. He told me that when any one offered him shelter, he slept on the veranda, but otherwise under a tree or in the precincts of a temple, and as for food, if people offered him a meal, he ate it and if they don't, he went without. (242)

The point is that, though Larry's description of Indian people is factual but as he is guided by colonial mentality, he only sees negative points of Indian people and elaborates them to establish whites' superiority over them.

Maugham has also presented the East as a place which supplies deadly drugs to the West. In the conversation with S. Maugham, Sophie Says:

Hakim's an Algerian and he can always get you opium if you've got the dough to pay for it . . . you can get all the opium you want, the sailors

bring it back from the East, and it's good stuff, not that muck they sell  
in Paris. (200)

These lines also help to show the negative attitude of the Westerners to the Middle East and India as a supplier of deadly drugs.

The paradigm of the East and the West played crucial role to create unbridgeable state between two geographical locations. They never explicitly give us the sense of absolute gap between superior and inferior due to artificial and created notion. Furthermore, it furthers the sense of marginalization of the West on the East that is imperial concept and germination of the colonial voice to subvert the East from the domain.

As Leela Gandhi writes in her book *Postcolonial Theory* that the Westerners translated the texts of Eastern philosophy and utilized the very knowledge to dominate it. She also takes Orientalism to refer any and every written discourse which has the claims, statements about the Non-Western world. Maugham in the novel, *The Razor's Edge* also presents the Eastern philosophy to the great extent. Larry tries to know more deeply about Hinduism to obtain the knowledge about mysterious cultural practices. His will to know about Hinduism is parallel to his will to get power to dominant and ostracized the East. Maugham presents Hindu Philosophy as:

Reality you can not say what it is: You can only say what it isn't. It's inexpressible. The Indians call it Brahman. Its nowhere and everywhere. All things imply and depend upon it. It is not a person, it is not a thing, it is not a cause. It has no qualities. It transcends permanence and change, whole and part, finite and infinite. It is eternal because its completeness and perfection are nucleated to time. It is truth and freedom. (243)

As Nietzsche says that all men are guided by "a will to power", every action thought and thinking of men are guided by the orientation towards power. He further says that if a man do something, power factor is embedded in the action. In this light, Larry's action of learning and will to get knowledge about India is also guided by the thought of gaining power. Maugham further writes in the novel about the concept of liberation from the bondage of rebirth:

According to Vedantists, the self, which they call the atamn and we call it soul, is distinct from the body and its sense, distinct from the mind and its intelligence, it is not the part of the Absolute, for Absolute itself. It is uncreated, it has existed from eternity and when at last it has cast off the seven veils of ignorance will return to the infinite from which it come. It is like a drop of water that has arisen from the sea and in a shower has fallen into a stream, after that into a river, passing through mountains gorges and wide plains, winding this way and that obstructed by rooks and fallen trees, till at last, it reaches the boundless sea from which it rose. (242)

For Orientalists, to have knowledge about the East is to dominate it, to have authority over it. The thing that Balfour states about Egypt that, "We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country" (qtd. in *Orientalism*)<sup>32</sup>. Balfour takes the knowledge about the Egypt as a form of power which helped westerners to impose so called superiority over the Othered culture and civilization. In this regard, Larry's attempts to know more about India can be seen synonymously in connection with Arthur James Balfour.

Similarly, Maugham depicts the so called uncivilized Indians and their lower standard living style by showing them as *Yogi* who live on begging. And subaltern

dress up of an old man is seen through colonial gaze "I saw one tall gaunt fellow, with a mass of tangled hair and a great ragged beard with nothing but a jock strap to cover his nakedness "(237).

In another visit with one of his native friends Larry states, "Then, he said good bye to me—it was funny to hear that guy in loincloth say, "Well, so long, old Chap . . ." (242). His depiction of the man "Dressed in nothing but a loincloth (241)" and "having begging bowl of the holy man (241)", shows his negative attitude clearly and vividly. Instead of saying, "he wore a loincloth", he repeatedly says, "nothing but a loincloth" which clearly hints his negative attitude, which can be studied under the category of latent Orientalism.

When Larry visits Shri Ganasha who permits him to sit with him, he says, "I adopted the Indian dress and I go so sun burnt that unless your attention was drawn to me, you might have taken me for native" (247). Though, he wears Indian clothes, he still has the sense of superiority and makes differentiation between him and the native.

Towards the last part of the novel, when Larry decides to return from India, he visits Shri Ganasha to bid him fare well. He describes his visit with Shri Ganasha as: "Shri Ganasha was surprised to see me in European cloths. I had put them on at the forestry office's bungalow when I started uphill because it was colder there and hadn't thought to change them" (252).

The issue regarding native cloth and European cloth is brought here to show the vast gap between them. The clothes which merely can't cover the nakedness symbolizes the Easterner's sympathetic state. By showing such condition in Orientalist texts, Westerners try to be superior master or teacher over the Orient to teach the natives their so called civilization. The discourse produced by Maugham seems to have had an imperial notion on Indian people.

To show the native's clothing style inferior, the person who has worn European cloth is described in the novel with praise and glory. The very act is done to give great importance for European style and culture. Even European education is shown as higher education in comparison to natives. Oxford is taken as the center of knowledge to valorize European academies. Larry states about the meeting with a friend of Madura as:

I was recommended to the minister of finance. He had had an European education and had been to Oxford. When you talk to him you got the impression of a progressive, intelligent and enlightened man, and he had the reputation of being an extremely efficient minister and a clever, astute, politician. He wore European clothes and was very natty in appearance. He was rather a nice-looking fellow, a little on the stout side as Indian tends to become in middle age with a close-cropped neat moustache. (239)

In this light, the native peoples' European dress up is depicted as superior and important and native peoples' dress up of their native clothes as inferior and trivial. This act of showing the gap between the East and the West is guided by ghetto mentality of Western scholars.

Maugham presents some of the characters who try to speak English language, which gives the hints that Indians are not out of the English touch. As post colonial critics claim that language works as a means to dominate the native people. Here, in the novel also Larry's sense of English language as a superior language has indicated towards the English speakers domination over the natives. This act has created, in Homi Bhabha's term, the condition of mimicry where colonized becomes influenced by the culture, language, behaviour etc. of colonizer:

In his visit to forestry officer, Larry says that, "He was a devotee of Shri Ganesha and when he could get away from his work came and spent two or three days with us. He was a nice fellow and we had long talks. He liked to practice his English on me" (248).

In this light if the lines are analyzed, it can be seen that Larry has dominative attitude towards the forestry officer. While talking with Larry, Maugham asks the question about Shri Ganesha "did he speak English? (246)" and Larry replies, "No. But you know, I am pretty quick at languages. I'd picked up enough Tamil to understand and make myself understood in the south "(246). Native people's knowledge on English is presented derogatively in the novel, *The Razor's Edge*. When Isabel asks Larry, "How did you communicate with them? In English" (137), Larry answers: "The most interesting, if they spoke at all, didn't speak it very well and understood less. I learnt Hindustani. And when I went south I picked up enough Tamil to get along pretty well" (137).

Larry tries to learn Hindi and Tamil languages to understand natives by the motive of dominating them after understanding. When Larry lives in Benaras, he Shares his experience with Maugham about the Indian People as: "They were pleased that I should wish to learn Hindustani and found teacher for me. They lent me books. They were never tired of answering my question" (238).

The native peoples' inclination toward the English language is due to the domination of English language over Hindi language. It shows that people have inwardly accepted English domination in culture, religion, language etc.

The protagonist, Larry Darrell, wishes to learn Greek language. Though Isabel takes Greek language as "dead language (79)". Larry is enchanted by the charm of language learning. The following extract gives the same sense.

"What that great book on the table?" She asked.

"That's ? Oh, that's my Greek dictionary'.

"Your what?" What cried.

"Its all right. It won't bite you". (62)

In another event, when Isabel converses with Maugham, she says, "Poor Larry. He is learning Greek to cook up a bank robbery "(78). Again she asks to Maugham, "What can be the possible use of Larry's leaning dead language" (79), and Mangham replies, "Women people have a distinct desire for knowledge. It's not an ignorable desire (79)". Again Isabel asks, "What is the good of knowledge, if you are not going to do anything with it ?" (79). At last Maugham clarifies saying that," perhaps he is, perhaps it: it will be sufficient satisfaction merely to know, as it's a sufficient to an artist to produce a work of art and perhaps it's only a step towards something further "(79).

From the conversation, it is clear that Larry's attempt to learn other languages is guided by in, Nietzsche's term "a will to power". He wants to get power by understanding them and using them for his benefits. Larry's wish for the "acquisition of knowledge" is parallel to his wish for the "acquisition of power".

In due course of visiting and learning Indian language, cultures and places, he acquires power which enables him to expose his superiority over the natives. He implicitly as in latent form uses his knowledge to prove the European's so called high position.

Larry describes his engagement with the natives when they suffer from many diseases and calamities as:

My Indian friend told people what I'd done when we got back to civilization and he brought others to see me. I hated doing it, because I couldn't quite understand it, but they insisted. Somehow or other, I did



them good. I found I was able to relieve people not only from pain but of fear. Its strange how many people suffer from it. I don't only mean fear of closed spaces and fear of lights but fear of death and what's worse fear of life. Often they're people who seem in the best health, prosperous, without worry and yet they are tortured by it. (222)

Larry takes himself as a savor of people from fear of death and life. Though, he pretends to be unknown about the real fact of mystery he has psychological superiority inwardly.

Maugham's representation of the East or India as exotic, mysterious, spiritual, backward, uncivilized, poverty stricken etc. have made him Orientalist. He describes the territory of India as something which is always inviting Europe to control it, to consume it and to present it in their texts. Larry states:

There are holy man who live alone in a temple in the forest or on the slopes of Himalayas. There are others who attract disciples . . . In Travancore, a beautiful country of green hills and valleys and soft flowing rivers. Up in the mountains there are tigers, Leopards, elephants and bison but Ashrama was on a lagoon and all around it grew coconuts and areca palms. (137)

On the basis of the knowledge which he gets in India, he writes a book. Maugham describes about the book as:

The choice he had made puzzled me. There was one on Sulla, the Roman dictator, who having achieved absolute power, resigned it to return to private life, there was one on Akbar, the Mogul conqueror who won an empire, there was one on Rubens, there was one on Gothe and there was one on the Lord chesterfield of the letters. it was obvious that each

of the essay had needed a tremendous amount of reading and I was no longer surprised that it had taken Larry so long to produce this book. Then it occurred to me that every one of them in his own way had made a supreme success of life . . . (275)

These extracted lines show that Westerners are habituated of creating Orientalist text only on the basis of their superficial reading. His book is also contradictory because it also includes the depiction of Akbar who ran after empire though Larry lover spirituality and is illuminated himself. The book must contain things about spirituality and it lacks them which shows that his claim of illumination is artificial.

At last Larry returns to France and plans to go America and lead a spiritual life in materialistic world. He tells Maugham that he got what he desired. Larry describes the moment when he believes he had got illumination as:

I had a strange sensation, a tingling that arose in my feet and travelled up to my head, and I felt as though I were suddenly released from my body and as pure spirit partook of a loveliness I had never conceived. I had a sense that a knowledge more than human possessed me, so that everything that had been confused was clear and everything that had perplexed me was explained. I was so happy that it was pain and I struggled to release myself from it, for I felt that if it lasted a moment longer I should die, and yet it was such rapture that I was ready to die rather than forgo it. How can I tell you what I felt no words can tell the ecstasy of my bliss. When I came to myself I was exhausted can rambling. I fell asleep. (249)

His descriptive style seems quite praiseworthy but it is also same as fictionalization of spirituality. Although he tells Maugham that he finally gained the illumination he

sought in India, and the narrative strives to give the impression that Larry has been on a long spiritual quest, the truth is that he doesn't seem much different in the end than he was in the beginning. He was never greatly attached to things or to people – witness his lack of interest in making money and the ease with which he renounces Isabel—so the spiritual development that he later describes does not have much impact on the reader and seems superficial and imaginative.

Though Larry claims, he is not like other westerners and writes, "When they discovered I hadn't come to shoot tigers or to buy or sell anything, but only to learn, they did everything to help me" (238). It shows that Maugham himself is aware about the vast crevasse between the Orient and the Occident that made his novel *The Razor's Edge* biased.

#### IV. Conclusion

Critique of Orientalism applies everywhere in the text where Maugham is seen as an Orientalist writer who is basically guided by colonial mentality. Being an Orientalist writer, he depicts India, Indian culture, religion etc. in totally negative light. Though he explicitly claims as a well wisher and enchanted person from Hindu philosophy, he implicitly depicts his culturally rooted superiority over the natives.

As his book mostly contains exotic sexual aspect of the East, *The Razor's Edge* is not far from it. There is synchronization between the publication of the 'exotic' writings and the events of the author's life. In the novel, Maugham is primarily concerned with the depiction of the Europe in a strange, exotic environment and with the effect which remote out-posts, tropical climate and fearful alien forests. The novel presents literary and philosophical environment of the exotic. The Eastern mythical elements which are found in Maugham's writing are generally inclined to reject is as an aberration. Maugham, the character as well as narrator in the novel, seems to be widely travelled Englishman tacitly articulating his apprehension about understanding the distant Eastern culture. By dividing the globe into two parts "the Orient" and "the Occident", it seems, in the novel that he is preparing for the reader for greater gulf between the west and India.

Maugham's employment of the characters like Larry Darrell, Isabel, Gray and Sophie is basically guided by imperial notion. All the characters mentality guide the readers to search the stereotypical representation of the natives or the Easterner or the Indians. Maugham's diplomatic strategy tries to conceal the motives of domination but slips from the loopholes of the novel where Larry, Isabel, Eliotte, Greasy are responsible persons for it. Maughams representation is not factual and guided by

biasness. Though he seems to praise Hindu philosophy, he criticizes it linking it with events and characters of the novel.

Larry comes to India for spiritual quest and he stays there for five years, but he takes act of worshipping the Hindu mythological Gods and religious practices as an impossible thing to believe. His colonial mentality also sees the East as uncivilized, spiritual, barbaric etc. but praises them who embodies western ethos. Contemporary society and the texts of that time shaped the mind of Maugham and compelled him to be a known Orientalist writer who has worn the glass which always sees others as inferiors.

All the characters are negative towards the East but more responsibility goes to Maugham who has dual role as the narrator and writer of the novel because Maugham employs Larry Darrel as his spokesperson in the novel which has helped him to bring out all his hidden motives.

The novel set from the issue of spirituality, religion, cultural differences, language variation. But all these issues are encompassed by an umbrella term Orientalism. Due to the impact of Orientalism, the act of portraying other, other's culture, religion, language has taken negative attitude. As Orientalism is taken as the first phase of colonialism; it gave moral support for the westerner to dominate the Easterner. Orientalism became a knowledge and that knowledge transformed in to power through the stereotypical representation. Division between geographical location as the Orient and the Occident brought unbridgeable gap between two culture. And the Orientalist writers protected the inferior representation of the East in the chain of Oriental texts. *The Razor's Edge* is also a joint in that chain which embodies the Oriental ethos.

In conclusion, *The Razor's Edge* is a product of Oriental writer and full of Oriental discourse that has increased the play of superiority and inferiority between the East and the West. The novel also presents the dominating psyche of Maugham who not only presents himself as Orientalist writer but also creates characters such as Larry, Isabel, Templeman, Sophie and Gray to fulfill inner motive of excluding the Orient.

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