The Notion Of Orientalism In Edward Said's Ideas

One of the most significant and pioneer contributions of the veteran Edward Said has been his book “Orientalism” in the field of literature. Said was a professor of literature at the prestigious Columbia University, and a founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies apart from being a public intellectual. His book has been extremely influential in many fields of social sciences, humanities, media studies and historic disciplines most prominently English literature, anthropology, area studies and English comparative studies among others. Despite the big boom that orientalism brought to literature or academia, Said’s horizons on art and literature has evolved over the years and later on were broadened in a book which was published nearly one and a half decade after Orientalism (1978), “Culture and Imperialism”. This second book was comparatively much lesser confrontational in tone and crux and had a sort of ambivalent acceptance. As Orientalism gravely questioned the debatable representation of the non-western nations or cultures, the second book “Culture & Imperialism” shed light upon the complexed ongoing equation between the western world with eastern world, the colonized communities and their colonizers, blacks and white etc.

Edward Said was one of the most impactful cultural figures of his times, late 20th century. In his book Orientalism, Said made influential argument that acclaimed scholarly writers and philosophers misrepresented eastern part of the world by providing misleading, stereotypical and inaccurate representations of the people and their culture in their writing. He unabashedly argues that the orientates stage that on which the entire eastern world is confined are nothing but biased perceptions which hinder the true or accurate understandings of middle-eastern and east Asian culture and societies, Further dwelling into Said’s study it can be said that Said argues that the western scholars couldn’t really understand the culture and nuances of the eastern people and in fact misinterpreted the dynamics and that is why they stereotypically just portrayed east as an exotic yet confusing periphery. He said that the difference between the cultural values of the eastern and western world is a major reason why the western scholars portrayed it in the way they did and since the eastern cultural nuances differed to the western, the western scholars considered their own culture as superior to that of the eastern society.

Said goes further and says that western political and cultural understanding is dubious analytically. He says that the western world portrayed a wrong picture in order to justify the western colonialist endeavors on the eastern world. The cruel and long-lasting colonization that west did on the eastern world has been justified by overwhelmingly misrepresentation the real situation and the need of the hour of the eastern world at that time. He mentions in his book that west painted this picture of the eastern world which needs proper civilization making them sound absolutely uncivilized. The overwhelming invasion of the western powers was altered as salvation, which was according to western scholars done to save the eastern societies from being broken and further messed up. It is portrayed as if the eastern economies needed an external administration to come and sort out their mess. Eastern people were portrayed as laid-back, lazy people who were extremely unfitting to govern their own lands and economies and west was gracious enough to help them get their standing foot. A fake intent of the western colonizes have been wrongly glorified which is extremely problematic for the worldwide historic narrative. Said says there it is possible that the west has been blinded and thus have stereotyped and misrepresented the eastern world as there were many loopholes in the western

arena as well that the western powers ignored. Said’s book can be termed as a flag bearer as the foundational draft for the postcolonial studies and for the Middle Eastern studies as his book was transforming like nothing else before. His theory is still extremely relevant today as far and provides reasoning for the patronizing behavior of the west towards the eastern cultures.