Sense of Supremacy in Arminius Vambery's *Travels in Central Asia*

Ahmad Gholi (Corresponding author)

English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Gonbad Kavous University, Golestan, Iran; Email: sirjustadina@gmail.com

Masoud Ahmadi Musaabad

English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Gonbad Kavous University, Golestan, Iran; Email: ahmadimusa@yahoo.com

Doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n5s2p183

Abstract

In the past, literary critics marginalized travelogues from their discussions and regarded them as a literary sub-category on the account of their want of literary merits. Nonetheless, in recent years thanks to the publication of *Orientalism* and *Imperial Eyes* by Edward Said and Mary Louise Pratt respectively, travel studies have gained literary prestige among the critics. Consequently, the travelogues have been subject to a vast array of critical approaches; nevertheless, the scholars of travel studies have paid less attention to the factors which give rise to Western travelers' sense of superiority. In this regard, the current article will concentrate on Arminius Vambery's *Travels in Central Asia* and it argues that Vambery exudes his sense of superiority in three ways: by representing Central Asians (Orientals) superstitious, viewing their food culture condescendingly, as well as by traveling in disguise for gathering information.

Keywords: Travel Writing, Superiority, Superstitious, Food Culture, Disguise

1. Introduction

Etymologically the word "travel" is a variant of "travail" "deriving in its turn from Latin *tripalium*, a torture instrument consisting of three stakes designed to rack body" (Fussell, 1980, p.39). In the core of this term lies the concept of mental and physical suffering. Functioning as a yardstick, the agony in journey draws the lines of demarcation between an authentic traveling subject who endures an arduous journey and tests his vigor and courage en route from an epicurean one who does not imperil his/her life by avoiding adventures and dangers. In addition, this dimension of travel has "the power to transform the lives of those survived it" (Whitefield, 2011, p.2); nonetheless, Syed Islam (1996) is dubious about the role of travail in the traveler's spiritual transformation. By definition travel "is the negotiation between self and other that is brought about by movement in the space" (Thompson, 2011, p.9); and this mobility which is interwoven with human life imparts change into humans' otherwise stagnant and tedious way of life and is an antidote to the fear of death associated with immobility. Philosophically, the appeal of travel, according to Fussell (1987), is indebted to John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which held that, "knowledge comes entirely through the external senses, and from mind's later contemplation of materials laid up in the memory as a result of sense experience" (p.129), and as a result, "if knowledge is rooted in experience and nowhere else, travel instantly gains in importance and desirability" (Buzzard, 2002, p.37). At the psychological level, the main pleasure of travel, Freud speculates, lies in "the fulfillment of... early wishes to escape the family and especially the father" (Cited in Mewshow, 2005, p. 2), but when it is considered in a large scale, the motives for undertaking the travel ranges from "exploration, conquest, colonization, diplomacy, emigration, forced exile, and trade to religious or political pilgrimage, aesthetic education, anthropological inquiry, and the pursuit of a bronzer body or bigger wave" (Porter, 1991, p.10). Travel played a significant role in the emergence of not only non-fictional subjects such as history, natural history, anthropology, and geography but also in a genre like novel in the realm of fiction (White, 2011). However, these travels do not necessarily end in travel writing since it is "a non-fictional first person prose narrative describing a person's travel(s) and spaces passed through or visited which is ordered in accordance with, and whose plot is determined by the order of narrator's act of travelling" (Chirico, 2008, p.39).

2. Brief History of Travel Writing

Like other genres in literature, travel writing evolved through out different periods and its history will be briefly offered here. The Middle Ages witnesses the emergence of three important travelogues. The First one is *Pilgrimage of Egeria* written by

a devout female Christian pilgrim visiting the Holy Land whose main focus is religious sites and biblical characters rather than the ethnographic accounts of the travelled region. Her disengagement from real life in Jerusalem, according to Korte (2000), stems from "curiositas- that is an enthusiasm for this world rather than one hereafter –was held by Christian doctrine to a suspect motive for traveling" (p.26). The second one is *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. Mandeville in his voyage to the Orient evinces curiosity for their cultures, religions, customs, and trade; nonetheless, he incorporates fantastical creatures such as "hermaphrodites, men who walks on all fours, men with no eyes or noses...women whose eyes can kill with one glance" (White, 2011, p.31) which render its veracity suspect. The third travelogue belongs to Marco Polo written by help of his imaginative prison mate before Mandeville. In his treatment of travelleses, he was more realistic and tolerant than Marco Polo; however, it is not without its defects since he does not refer to the "habit of tea drinking and the existence of the Great Wall" (p.27). This leads to critics' doubt about its authenticity. In the sixteenth and the seventeenth century which is characterized as the Age of Discovery, Raleigh writes his *The Discoveries of the Large, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* which recounts his expedition to legendary El Dorado in pursuit of gold and clearly reflects the spirit of this era. Commenting on its position in travel writing, Youngs (2013) remarks that it is "a transitional text that contains elements of medieval and early modern narrative while ushering in the modern" (p.34). In eighteenth century, Blanton (1995) states that "travel and travel writing more accepted and more readily available, had become entrenched in the European mind" (p.14). This period is marked by the rise of Grand Tour which is regarded as "the proper way to finish the education of a gentleman" (Goring, 2008, p.48); this form of refined journey has been instrumental in the appearance of a travelogue like *Boswell on the Grand Tour* in which according to Blanton, "both narrative and description, both traveler and world were its subject matter and its theme" (ibid.). Travel writing in Romantic period is "considered against the eighteenth century Grand Tour" (Butler, 1998, p.365). This type of travel places emphasis on travel writers' inner world. In addition, hitherto neglected sublime and wild scenery en route becomes worthwhile subject for them to portray and dwell on; as Gilpin views "a journey through these wild scenes might be attended perhaps with more improvement, than a journey to Rome or Paris" (cited in Butler, p. 366). Travel writing in Victorian period more than anytime is an accomplice in the expansion of British imperialism because it "offered exciting access to the unfamiliar...[and] contributed to Victorian self-fashioning by reinforcing a sense of British superiority and sophistication" (Moran, 2006, p.109). Travelogues written by Richard Burton and David Livingstone exemplify these trends. Modernism in the twentieth century was not restricted just in fiction; it influenced the genre of travel writing as well. For example, Robert Byron's *Road to Oxiana* demonstrates the spirit and features of modernism. Paul Fussell compares it with Joyce's *Ulysses* and T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land*, "what *Ulysses* is to the novel between the wars and what *The Waste Land* is to poetry, *The Road to Oxiana* to the travel book" (1980, p.95). In respect to travel writing in the twenty first century, Jan Morris, inveterate travel writer herself, believes travel writing has lost its charm for travel writers and its prospect is bleak because of globalization, "few of us want to be called travel writers nowadays, the genre has been cheapened and weakened in the times of universal travel and almost universal ambition" (cited in Youngs, 2013, p.177). Unlike the pessimistic prediction, the genre has adapted itself to new technologies and manifests its vitality not only via travel blogs and social networks like Facebook (ibid. p.180) but also footstep genre, an offshoot of travel writing, in which travel writers "journey in the steps of earlier travel writing" (p.184). Future of travel writing, according to Youngs, is not dark since "it is open to new directions and stimuli as its study" (p.189).

2.1 Arminius Vambery's Biography and His Travel to Central Asia

Arminius Vambery, (1831-1913) an orientalist-traveler, Turcologist, secret agent of Britain, frequent guest of Queen Victoria in Windsor Castle, and political expert on Central Asian affairs, was born into a poor Jewish family in Hungary. Unlike other Jewish students, he with his mother's unfailing support receives both a Christian and secular education among non-Jewish students and astonishes his teachers with his brightness. Despite financial constraints, after his unfinished high school, he immerses himself in studying European languages along with their literatures in his free time and amazingly learns them in a short time thanks to his diligence and prodigious mind. Enchanted with the Orient, "all my musings, endeavors, thoughts, and feelings tended towards the Land of the East, which was beckoning to me in its halo of splendor" (cited in Abraham, 2003, p. xii), he decides to seek his fortune there. Finally under the aegis of Baron Joseph Eotvos, a minister of education, he can afford to make a journey for Turkey so as to pursue his oriental dream. During his five-year stay in Istanbul, he not only acquires an Islamic education by attending religious lectures in madrassas but also learns main oriental languages such as Turkish, Arabic and Persians. After that period, he returns to his country and persuades the Hungarian Academy to give him a grant so that he can "investigate the similarities of [sic] between Turkish dialect known as Chagatai and Hungarian" (Mandler, 2007, p.3). To do so, he sets off for Persia where he travels as a disguised Turkish dervish for a year. His opportunity to undertake his philological research in the forbidden land of Central

Asia opens up when he meets a group of destitute Tartar Hajjis at Turkish embassy in Tehran planning their return trip to Central Asia; therefore, he introduces himself as a Turkish dervish who longs to make a pilgrimage to holy saints' tombs there. With his gift of gab and reciting some verses of Koran, he wins their approval to accompany them in their travel. When from Tehran they arrive at Gomushtepe, a coastal town in the north of Iran, they join a caravan heading to Khiva. After passing a horrifying desert, their caravan reaches Khiva, they halt there for some weeks, thus Vambery can observe city and even meet the Khan of Khiva. Afterwards they set out for Bukhara. In this city he narrowly escapes death because his incognito is about to be penetrated by the king and some others. After staying some days in Bokhara, they undertake their trip to Samarkand. Concerning the city, he claims that he is the first European who sets feet there since fourteenth century. There he parts from his companions, and leaves for Afghanistan. Finally he reaches Tehran in 1864 much to European ambassadors' disbelief since they had assumed he had perished in Central Asia. When in Hungary, he receives cold treatment for his groundbreaking travel, thereby journeying London with his letter of introduction obtained from British ambassador in Iran to present his geographical and ethnographical information. In England the Royal Geographical Society which is connected to British imperialism receives him warmly and welcomes his precious information about this less known world wherein lies England's political interests. England at that time was in intense competition with Russia over the control of this region. Fascinated with the adventures of his groundbreaking travel, his English friends spur him to publish his own travelogues. Heeding their advice, he signs a contract with John Murray, the prince of the publishers, and starts writing his *Travels in Central Asia* in English language in London which takes six months to complete. His travelogue becomes an immediate success. Given its literary merit, Abraham (2003) observes that its "narrative quite literally dazzle with detail ...[and] is distinguished by magnificent prose style...at once lyrical and imminently readable" (P. xiv), and it explains why Marvin states that "*Travels in Central Asia* for [its] graphic description and forcible diction has few equals in our literature of exploration" (1886, p.53). He has many other books as well, which are pertinent to history and politics. Vambery, the anglophile, dies in Budapest.

2.2 Methodology

Vambery in his travelogue records his observations in four Oriental destinations: Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan, and Central Asia (or West Turkistan) in the second half of nineteenth century. The significance of his travel lies neither in traversing Turkey and Iran, and Afghanistan, nor in writing about them because these places have been well traversed by Europeans in this era. In fact, the prime importance of his voyage is placed in Central Asia which was less known in Europe particularly in England. Therefore, this article will not deal with the travel writer's sense of superiority in the abovementioned regions; instead, it will attempt to explain this sense in Central Asia which was less explored and traversed. To illustrate the travel writer's sense of superiority in Central Asia, this article will draw on theories of Orientalism which is a good method in studies of travel writing since it provides good analytical tools to dissect the travel writer's Western consciousness or cultural baggage which engenders him the sense of superiority, and as a result, he cannot treat his observees and their culture sincerely and impartially. In this regard, this article will concentrate in three areas: superstition, food culture, and travel writer's disguise because they clearly show the travel writer's sense of supremacy and have not been addressed by any scholarly study in Vambery's *Travels in Central Asia* by any yet. To do so, first the article will provides background information about these arenas, and then it will illuminate how the travel writer in question utilizes them to manifest his sense of superiority.

2.3 Textual Analysis

Judy Marbo claims that Travel writing for Western travelers serves as a means to display their superiority, and they maneuver it textually by turning a blind eye to the similarities between themselves and their travelleses (Emberly, 2007, p.144). Matthee in his, *The Safavids under Western Eyes: Seventeenth-Century Europeans Travelers to Iran* delineates two types of superiority prevalent among the Western travelers in their travels to Islamic world in the sixteenth and the nineteenth century. During the sixteenth century, the main motive of the Western travelers who were affiliated to the Catholic church was to "convert Muslims or non-Catholic Christians and diplomats" (p.141) and their sense of superiority stemmed from "their ontological certitude about unquestioned superiority of Christians faith and attendant contempt for Islam" (ibid.), while in thenineteenth, the reason behind the sense supremacy in "panoptic, omniscient" Western travelers traveling as "a government official doubling up as a secret agent, a physician, and archeologist" (ibid.) was their "civilization, a complex set of habits and attitudes of which culture and race are essential components" (ibid.). As a Western, Orientalist traveler in his voyage to Asiatic periphery in the second half of the nineteenth century, Vambery was assured of his superiority and exhibited it by portraying Central Asians (Orientals) as superstitious people, viewing their

food culture condescendingly, as well as by traveling in disguise for collecting information.

2.4 Superstition

Webster's New World Dictionary defines "superstition" as "any belief or attitude based on fear or ignorance that is inconsistent with the known laws of science or with what is generally considered in particular society as true and rational especially such a belief in charm, omens, the supernatural, etc." Francis Bacon, the precursor of British Enlightenment discourse, in his essay entitled, *Of Superstition* deemed the superstition as a defining characteristics of simple people and the product of religions. Additionally, for him it was a deformity which corrupts common sense (p.65-66). During the Age of Enlightenment in early eighteenth century, Western philosophers revolted against Irrationality including superstition, and held it accountable for the humans' backwardness and the major obstacle to their progress (Age of Enlightenment). From their perspective, the solutions for it lay in Reason and abandoning all outmoded traditions which heavily encumber the mind and generate ungrounded fear (ibid.). Although eclipsed by Romanticism later, its heritages did not disappear, instead played pivotal role in the Western writers' standpoint like Vambery during the nineteenth century, and this explains why he "defined himself as a freethinker and adopted non-religious attitudes" (Landu, 2014, p.868). Travel writers in this epoch in their journey to the Orient capitalized on superstition as rhetoric, "a pattern of representation" (Spurr, 1993, p.8) in order to draw a distinction between the enlightened West and the irrational Orient, thereby endorsing their superiority and highlighting Orientals' inferiority. According to Dixon (1991), referring to superstition as "the essential characteristics of the Orientals is the common denominator of travel writing in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century" (p.101). Similarly, what Hilal Ajari (2003) states for the Middle East holds true for Central Asia as well, "European travellers to the Middle East [and other Oriental countries] have deliberately described the superstitions of natives in order to present, by contrast, the superiority of Western civilization" (p.179). Like other Western travel writers, Vambery in his travel to the secluded Central Asia deploys the rhetoric under study so as to draw his Western readers' attention to the fact that Central Asians are superstitious. In the travelogue under analysis Yakob, a young Turkmen boatman, before transferring the disguised travel writer and his fellow travellers to other side of Caspian, the threshold of Central Asia, confides his unhappy and unrequited love to him hoping that through him, he will obtain thirty drops of fresh rose oil of Mecca from Hadjis (pilgrims returning from Mecca), which are prerequisites both for writing a powerful Nuskha (love-magic-prescription) promised by Jewish magician to win the heart of his cold mistress and transforming her into an ardent beloved: "I know that hadjis (pilgrims) bring with them oil of roses ...and thou being the youngest of the chiefs of the caravan, I apply to thee and hope thou wilt comply with my request" (Vambery, 1884, p.154). In this part, the travel writer utilizes Yakob as a synecdoche, that is, "a part of something [a member of society] is used to signify all [the whole community]" (Abrams, 2009, 120). This trope affords the travel writer an opportunity to demonstrate the superstitious mentality of the whole central Asian (Orientals) people by reporting and revealing Yakob's firm faith in the magical function of the written charm. Thompson points out that travel writers normally recourse to this stylistic strategy since they cannot "survey every inch of a new environment, or become familiar with every member, and every nuance, of a foreign culture" (2011, p.71), and this leads to the subjective picture of traversed terrain and unmasking their unconscious and conscious intentions, "they arguably tell us much more about the conceptual matrices, the conscious and unconscious assumptions, and frequently the ambitions of the individuals and communities that produce them, than they do about the people or place they purport to describe" (ibid.). Accordingly, Vambery by depicting Central Asians superstitious people by utilizing the synecdoche, he writes about his cultural assumption; that is, the Westerners are superior due to their rationality, whereas Central Asians (Orientals) are inferior because of their belief in charm. The following passage attests to it:

"The superstition of this son of desert did not so much astonish me as the trust he had in the words of the cunning Israelite [a Jewish magician], and as my travelling friends had really brought with them such attar [oil] of roses his wish was soon gratified. The joy that he displayed was almost childish."(Vambery, 1864, p.36).

The fact that Yakob' belief in the written talisman does not astound him points to the travel writer's essentialist stance. In other words, this cultural assumption indicates that he deeply believes that Central Asians (Orientals) are essentially superstitious, and thus there is nothing surprising and new surrounding it.

2.5 Food Culture

Travel writing from Lisle's perspective is not an innocent genre written without any ulterior motives, instead it is a

politically informed text which partakes "in the production of difference" (2006, p.24) by "categorizing, critiquing and passing judgment on less-civilized areas of the world [like Central Asia]" (p.3). As an outstanding component of each culture, food is one of the issues normally discussed in the travelogues, as encountering it is unavoidable. Given that it "plays major role ... [in] identity formation and [is a] vehicle for (self-) definition" (Kostova, 2003, p.22) Western travelers have dwelt on it in their travelogues to generate cultural difference, thereby exuding their superiority. Vambery travels to Central Asia in Victorian period when "travel writing displays explicit Orientalist disdain for the foods of the other, linking them with dirt and disgust thus rejecting the Other entirely" (Nyman, 2007, p. 99). With regard to food culture in Central Asia, the travel writer looks at it dispassionately and condescendingly. In his book entitled *Sketches of Central Asia: Additional Chapters on My Travels, Adventures, and on the Ethnology of Central Asia*, he writes like an anthropologist; this type of endeavor among travel writers is not uncommon, as Levi-Strauss notes "travelers may be equally keen to see, or even bill themselves as anthropologists" (cited in Holland et al, 1998, p.12) because both of them "occupy the position of power and ... that allows them to establish an often unwarranted authority over their subjects" (Ibid.). In the same book, he devotes a chapter to *House, food, and Dress*. In this section, he adopts a third person narrator so that he can impartially provide information concerning the list of favorite victuals and foods as well recipes. The following passage highlights the travel writer's disinterested attitudes,

"The food of the Tartars consists principally of meat. Bread, in many parts of the country, although not unknown, is yet a rare luxury. Mutton is favorite meat; next to this goat's flesh, beef and horse flesh; camel's flesh is least valued...in some parts of Central Asia sausages are made of entrails...Another dish of the Tartars is Tchorek, a soup with small dumplings in it, which are filled with spice and minced meat...Thirdly, Sheole, a partridge of rice mixed up with meat and dried meat. Fourthly Bulamuk, a dish [is] consisting simply of flour, water and fat. Fifthly, Mestava, rice boiled in sour milk, a dish exclusively for the summer, as former in the winter. Besides these dishes there are the Yarma, corn bruised and boiled in milk; Godje, a kind of partridge, made of the Molcussorghum...Among Central the settled nations of Central Asia, Tea is the favorite drink, and among nomads, especially the Kirghis tribe, it is the Kumis. In the summer they drink green tea, which thins the blood and promotes digestion; but in the winter black tea (brick tea)...Cooling drinks are the Airan, sour milk mixed with water" (pp. 117-120).

In the former part, Vambery masks his sense of Western superiority concerning Central Asians' food via assuming the pose of an objective ethnologist. Notwithstanding, he reveals it in *Travels in Central Asia* (1864) by adopting a patronizing attitude towards their food culture which he manifests it through focusing on the negative side of their food culture namely their immoderacy in drinking and eating which stands in sharp contrast with that of Westerners. His dark outlook on their eating and drinking manners is in tune with Wadd's racist views on food consumption and corpulence. Kostova (2003) observes that "distinct traces of Wadd's strictures on... immoderate eating are to be found in eighteenth and nineteenth century travel writing about Islamic Orient" (p.25). According to him, "Weight regulation [or curbing overeating is an index of] refinement" (qtd. in Kostova, p. 25). Furthermore, he criticizes Asiatic and African cultures for encouraging gluttony which leads to obesity [ibid.]. Vambery, the representative of Western food culture, in his travel writing depicts himself as an abstemious person who observes the gold mean even in an inhospitable desert where drinkable water is scarce, whereas he pejoratively portrays his companions, Orientals par excellence, in terms of bestial imagery as if they are a close relative of a quadruped animal like camels owing to their competition with each other in taking brackish and salt water, and heedless of a civilized man's advice,

I would not exchange it [his water in leather skin] with for the bitter, nauseous fluid of these wells, out of which the camels were made to drink some of my fellow travelers made their provisions. I was astonished to see how latter vied with their four-footed brethren in drinking; they laughed at my councils to be abstemious, but had later occasion to rue their having slighted them (Vambery, 1864, p.107).

Moreover, as a Western traveler, Vambery criticizes Central Asian culture both for regarding self-restraint in eating as a sign of cowardice and low birth, as well as encouraging excessive eating and incontinence which for him is emblematic of Central Asians' lack of civilization and savagery. In addition, he describes their eating habits in terms of war imagery, albeit humorously. His description suggests that the travellers look at their food as their foe that they have to vanquish immediately, and if they are victorious in their battle, in fact they have accomplished something heroic, otherwise it will be proof of their weakness and low birth, but, by contrast, the travel writer who controls his appetite, proudly states that he is a coward. Ironically, his timidity is not only the sign of his proper breeding but also a criterion to distinguish him from his uncivilized companions.

"To be able to able to no more" is an expression regarded by the Central Asiatic as incredible or, at least, as indicating low breeding. My pilgrim brethren always gave brilliant proofs of their bon ton [good taste]. My wonder is that they could support the heavy pillow [dish made of rice and mutton] for upon one occasion I reckoned that each of them

had devoured one pound of fat from the tail of the sheep, two pounds of rice, without taking any account of bread, carrots, turnips, and radishes; and all this washed down, without any exaggeration, by from fifteen to twenty large soup plates full of green tea. In such a heroic feats I was naturally coward; and it was astonishment of every one that I, so well versed in books, should have acquired only a half acquaintance with the requisite of polite breeding" (pp. 131-132).

2.6 Disguise

In the medieval times, Central Asia in Europeans' imagination was "the locus of all kinds of imaginary horrors, the site of absolute otherness" (Bassnett, 2005, p.400), but in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries Silk Road which connects Europe to Central Asia lost its appeal for Westerners due to "the opening of sea routes to [the New World]" (Ibid.), and as a result "attention shifted to the New World as the primary locus of European fantasies of otherness" (Ibid.) Nonetheless, Central Asia again in the course of nineteenth century "acquired a political significance [for England and Russia mainly, and consequently] Europeans began to travel there again" (Hopkirk, 2013, p.210). The geo-political importance of this region in this period lies in England's deep concern over Russians' imperialistic design to annex Khanates of Central Asia [or Turkestan] and then invade and appropriate the Northwest Frontier of India. This political rivalry which is called Great Game rendered Central Asia a 'contested' land for these super powers. Central Asia because of sharing a long border with Russia was an easy prey for Tsarist Russia; while for England its remoteness induced a major challenge; on one hand, she was desperate to keep the secret activities of Russia under constant surveillance to protect India, her jewel in the crown; on the other hand, it was inaccessible for her agents and sponsored-travellers to venture and spy the region. The reasons for its unreachability are highlighted by Charles Marvin (1886),

"The collapse of English to Afghanistan, and the cruel murder of Stoddart and Conolly in Bokhara, had given Central Asia an evil reputation. Travelers had avoided it. By degrees mists had gathered over the khanates, and the public of Europe had come to regard Central Asia as an uncanny region no Frengi [European] could show himself without risking a cruel and lingering death, or what was perhaps worse, lifelong slavery among thousands of other in Khiva and Bokhara...Such was dread which, acts like these inspired, that no Englishman dared venture beyond the Persian frontier to see what the Russians were doing in Aral [Sea]" (p.4).

The only plausible solution for this thorny problem was infiltrating into this forbidden territory by virtue of disguised travelers and the case in point is Vambery, a pro-English traveller. He accomplished this mission by mastering Islamic knowledge, oriental languages and customs in Turkey before embarking on his journey in the guise of an oriental poor dervish. In fact, act of masquerading by him bears testimony to his superiority over the travelles/observees by being "a valuable resource for the information-gathering apparatus" (Behdad, 1994, p.127) of British imperialism and bridging the gulf between knowledge and power. Behdad compares a disguised traveller-cum-orientalist who assumes the garb of colonized (travelles/ observees) to a parasite which feeds on its host (the colonized/travelles) (p. 121) and believes that this cultural masquerading is not "a mode of identification with the other but as kind of phallocentric appropriation of oriental signifier ...behind which European self prevails," who is desirous to "penetrate inaccessible layers of oriental society" (p.123) in order to provide political information hankered after by Western policy makers, and this explains why *The Times* at that time acknowledges the value of his travel in somehow terra incognita "[he] would make us acquainted with countries of so much political interest in England" (qtd in Adler et al, 1979, p.225) by offering different types of practical information namely commercial and political,

"And now here came Vambery, freshly arrived from these countries [Central Asia]. He could give firsthand information on matters of political, military and commercial importance (for trade was naturally of paramount importance, even to these distant lands). England needed to find export markets for her goods. Vambery's importance to England lay above all in fact that he knew the languages of Central Asia and could eavesdrop not only gossips in bazaars and tea-rooms but in high places as well. He was an invaluable asset to Britain in helping her statement to assess the friendly or hostile feelings of the strategically placed Khanates" (p.215).

Delivering this sort of invaluable information to the political-military institutions of Victorian England anxious not only to extend her influence in supposedly barbarous Central Asia and curb Russia's ambition is tantamount to asserting the traveler's superiority to the natives of Turkistan (Central Asians) whom he deceives by adopting their mores and manners. Here Indira Ghose's view about Richard Burton who disguised himself as a physician among Arabs and collected useful information concerning their region (Said, 1979, p.196), holds true for Vambery's cultural incognito as well, Burton's "penchant for traveling in native disguise served to underline his sense of racial superiority towards natives

and his arrogance towards hidebound peers" (2006, p.83).

3. Conclusion

Syed Islam (1996) in his book, *The Ethics of Travel from Marco Polo to Kafka* introduced sedentary travelers into the travel writing studies. The travelers in question despite voyaging into far destinations and performing "many ritual of departures", they actually do not travel because they "move folded in the inside" (p.56) and "carries their boundaries on their back as they move" (p.45). These travelers in lieu of establishing cultural dialogues with their observees, displaying sympathy and empathy for them, focusing on commonality, appreciating their culture and ingenuity and adopting an insider perspective, highlight differences to heighten their sense of superiority. The sense under scrutiny is easily traceable in travelogues about the Orient written by the Western travel writers like Vambery. As a sedentary traveler, he exhibits this sense in his travel to Central Asia by deploying the superstition as the rhetoric to reveal Central Asians' irrationality and anachronism, representing their food culture inferior since it promotes immoderacy, as well as traveling in disguise which enabled him to collect commercial and political information about Central Asia in the context of Great Game.

References

- "Age of Enlightenment". Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008. .
- Abraham, R. (2003). Introduction. In V. Arminius, *Travels in Central Asia* (pp. ix-xxiii). London: Cambridge Scholars Press Ltd.
- Abrams, M. (2009). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Adler, Lory; Dalby, Richard. (1979). *The Dervish of Windsor Castle*. London: Bachman & Turner Ltd.
- Bacon, F. (2001). The Essays. Retrieved 3, 15, 2015, from www.Library Genesis.org.
- Bassnett, S. (2005). Translating Terror. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.26, No.3, 393-403.
- Behdad, A. (1994). *Belated Travellers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*. London: Duke University Press.
- Blanton, C. (1995). *Travel Writing: The Self and World*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1998). *Travel Writing*. In D. Wu (Ed.), *A Companion to Romanticism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publisher Ltd.
- Buzard, J. (2002). *Grand Tour and After (1660-1840)*. In P. Hulme, & T. Youngs (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chirico, D. (2008). The Travel Narrative as (Literary) Genre. In *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Dixon, J. (n.d.). Representations the East in English and French Travel Writing 1798-1882. Retrieved from <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/id/eprint/35766> (Jan, 1, 2015)
- Emberly, J. (2007). Gertrude Lowthian Bell in Mesopotamia. In *Writing, Travel, and Empire: In the Margins of Anthropology* (pp. 119-146). London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Fussell, P. (1980). *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between Wars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fussell, P. (Ed.). (1987). *The Norton Book of Travel*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.
- Ghose, I. (2006). Imperial Player: Richard Burton in Sindh. In T. Youngs (Ed.), *Travel Writing in Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces*. London: Anthem Press.
- Goring, P. (2008). *Eighteenth- Century Literature and Culture*. London: Continuum.
- Hilal, A. (2003). *British Travel Writing on Oman: Orientalism Reappraised*. London: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers.
- Holland, P., & Huggan, G. (2000). *Tourist with Type Writers*. Michigan: Michigan University Press.
- Hopkirk, K. (2013). *Central Asia: Through Writer's Eyes*. London: Eland.
- Islam, S. (1996). *The Ethics of Travel: From Marco Polo to Kafka*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Korte, B. (2000). *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*. London : Macmillan.
- Kostava, L. (2003). "Meals in Foreign Part: Food in Writing by Nineteenth Century British Travellers to Balkans". *Journeys: International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing*, Vol.4, No.1, 21-44.
- Landau, J. (2017). Arminius Vambery: Traveller, Scholar, Politician. *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.50, No.6. pp. 857-869.
- Lisle, D. (2003). *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mandler, D. (2007). Introduction to Arminius Vambery. *Shofar*, Vol. 15. No.3, 3-15.
- Marvin, C. (1886). *Reconnoitring Central Asia: Pioneering Adventures in the Region Lying Between Russia and India*. London: Le Bas & Lowery.
- Matthee, (2007). The Safavids under Western Eyes: Seventeenth-Century European Travelers to Iran. *Journal of Early Modern History*, 137-171, Vol. 13.
- Mewshaw, M. (2005). *Travel Writing and Literature of Travel*. The South Central Modern Language Association, Vol.22, No 2, 2-10.
- Moran, M. (2006). *Victorian Literature and Culture*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Nyman, J. (2007). "We Call it 'English Prosciutto' Food, Travel and Nation in Paul Richardson's *Cornucopia*". In J. Nyman, & P. Gallardo (Eds.), *Mapping Appetite: Essays on Food, Fiction and Culture*. New Castle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing.

- Porter, D. (1991). *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Spurr, D. (1993). *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. London: Duke University Press.
- "Superstition". *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1984). New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Thomson, C. (2011). *Travel Writing*. London: Routledge.
- Vambery, A. (1864). *Travels in Central Asia*. London: John Murray.
- Vambery, A. (1868). *Central Asia: Additional chapters on My travels, Adventures, and on the Ethnology of Central Asia*. London: Wm. H. Allen & Co.
- Whitefield, P. (2011). *Travel: A Literary History*. Oxford: The Bodleian Library.
- Youngs, T. (2013). *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. New York : Cambridge University Press.