Introduction

The introductory chapter provides the background material to the dissertation entitled “Travel, Transition and Transnationality in Pico Iyer’s Writings.” This chapter views Travel Literature as an oldest form and explores its long and rich tradition. Also, it analyses the works of the predecessors of Pico Iyer.

Burton Holmes, an American traveller, photographer and film maker, coined the term “travelogue.” Travel Writing is an oldest genre that has fascinated human beings ever since the beginning of the recorded history. It is the record of the experiences of an author or an explorer who travels to a place for the pleasure of travel or adventure. An individual work is sometimes known as a travelogue or an itinerary. Holmes was the first person to put travel stories, slide shows, and motion pictures that existed before documentary travel lectures. Many forms of travel writing exist – guidebooks, diaries, journals, essays, poetry and memoirs. There is however, a major difference between guidebooks and travel books. Guidebooks provide necessary information to a traveller. A travel book, on the other hand, falls into the domain of literature. They are often autobiographical, and reveal the personality of the traveller.

The literature of travel has a long history and rich tradition. The examples of early travel literature include Pausania’s Description of Greece (2 AD), the travelogues
of Ibn Jubayr (1145-1214) and Ibn Battuta (1304 - 77). Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta travelled across the Islamic countries. They ventured so widely and wrote authoritatively. The other two more recent examples are Che Guevara’s *The Motorcycle Diaries* and Lucian Samosata’s (c125-after c.180) *True History*. The *True History* documents an excellent journey that amuses the readers with many fabulous mythical stories.

Decimus Magnus Ausonius (c.310 – 395) was a poet who lived in the fourth century. His *Mosella* is about his trip to the banks of the river Mosella, then in Gaul. Faxian (c.337 - c.422), was a Chinese traveller who travelled in India and Ceylon. *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms* is the notable work written by him. Rutilus Claudius Namatianus (c.416) was a fifth century poet whose *De reditu suo* [Concerning His Return] describes his expedition along the Mediterranean sea coast from Rome to Gaul.

Xenophon (431 - 355 BC) also lived in the fifth century. His *Aenabasis* narrates the expedition of Cyrus the Younger, a Persian prince, against his brother, King Artaxerxes II. *Great Tang Records on the Western Region* is an account of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang (602 - 664) who travelled from China to India. Ennin’s (c.793 or 794-864) *The Record of Pilgrimage in Search of Law* (838 - 47) is a narrative of his travels in Tang China. Ahmad Ibn Fadlan’s (c.921) *Kitab ila Mulk al – Saqaliba [A Letter to the King Al- Saqaliba]* chronicles his account of the Caliphal Embassy from Baghdad to the King of the Volga Bulghars, *Safarnama* (c.1046) by Nasir Khusraw (1004-88) gives an account of his travels in the Middle East. *The Travels of
Ibn Jubayr (c.1185) by Abu ad–Din al-Husayn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Jubayar (1145 - 1217) and Gerald of Wales’ (1146 - 23) Itinerarium Cambriae [Journey Through Wales] are the two significant pieces in the twelth century. Yaqut al–Hamawi (1179 - 1229) wrote Mujam Al-Buldan [Dictionary of Countries] in the thirteenth century.

Morco Polo (1254 -1324,1325), the most popular Venetian traveller of all time, travelled to Central Asia, the Gobi Desert and the Mongol Empire from Tibet to Burma and Southern India. He returned home voyaging three – and – a half year (1275-92). He recorded his adventures at the court of Kublai Khan. He travelled for power and gain. Il Milione [1298] is an influential work by him. Friar Odoric travelled through Asia for fourteen years in the early fourteenth century. His writings contain a great deal of anthropological details, carefully observing the customs, appearance, eating habits and social rituals of the people he met. In the account of a journey made to the court of Kuyuk Khan (1245 - 47) by Friar John of Pian de Carpini, the author is picturing the Mongolos, and Tartars. He describes their “flat and small noses,” “little eyes and eyelids” and “short feet.” His work is full of this kind of minute details.

Ibn Battuta (1304 -77) was a Moroccan world traveller. He began his journey with a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1326, and he visited most of the Arab countries in the next thirty years. His Rihla (1355) titled A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling covers his explorations. Sir John Mandeville’s Travels, written in the mid 1300s, is a record of his pilgrimage to
Jerusalem. He was one the great travellers in history. His work was widely read and was even used by Columbus. The book became a “manual for pilgrims to the Holy land” (Fussell 65). He also wrote about the lands of Amazons “where only women ruled and a land where people had only one foot” (Fussell 65). Ghiyath al-din Naqqash who lived in the fifteenth century wrote, in Persian, about his travel from Herat to Beijing (1420-22) on a diplomatic mission. It was considered the most detailed narrative on China in the Persian and Turkish Literature.

Ma Huna (ca.1380-1460) and Fei Xin (ca.1385- after 1436) chronicled in their books the places they visited with Zheng He’s fleet. The sixteenth century produced many major travel pieces. Baburnama is a collection of memoirs written by Thahir – ud – Din– Muhammad Babur (1483-1531). He was the founder of Mughal Empire. He gives a detailed account of his visits, the places he lived and the lands he conquered. The Book of Duarte Barbosa: An Account of the Countries Bordering the Indian Ocean and their Inhabitants (1516) is a remarkable work by the Portuguese writer and explorer Duarte Barbosa (?-1521). He happened to die in Megellan’s circumnavigation. Gaspar da Cruz (ca. 1520 - 70) is an important travel writer. His Tratado das Cousas da China turned to be the first detailed work on China in Europe. It is about his experiences in Cambodia and Hormuz. The Portuguese explorer and writer Fernaño Mendes Pinto (1509-83) wrote Peregrinacao [Pilgrimage]. It was published posthumously in the year 1614. It is a memoir of his travels in the Middle and the Far East, Ethiopia, Arabian Sea, India and Japan. He was one of the first
Europeans to arrive it in 1542. Richard Hakluyt’s who lived between c. 1552-1616, published *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589). It was estimated to be a foundational writing of the exploration literature genre.

Evliya Celebi (1610-83), Johann Sigmund Wurffbain (1613-61) Francois de la Boullaye – Le Gouz (1623-68) and Matsuo Basho (1644 - 94) were the celebrated writers in the seventeenth century. Evliya Celebi’s *Seyahatname*, Johann Sigmund Wurffbain’s *Reise Nach Den Molukken Und Vorder – Indien* [meaning *Travel to the Moluccas and the Middle East Indies* 1646] and Francois de la Boullaye – Le Gouz’s *Les Voyages et Observations du sieur de La Boullaye Le gouz* (1653, 1657) are genuine books of travel. *Kashima Kiko* entitled, *A Visit to Kashima Shrine* (1687), *Oi no Kobumi, or Utatsu Kiko* [Record of a Travel – Worn Satchel (1688)], *Sarashina Kiko* [A Visit to Sarashina Village, (1688)], *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches* (trans. 1967), by Matsuo Basho are the other important travel books.

In the eighteenth century, literature of travel was commonly known as the book of travels. It mainly consisted of maritime diaries. Travel Writing flourished at the time. Almost every author wrote some type of travel books. In *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1960), John Locke (1632-1704) stated that man gains knowledge “entirely through the external sense, and from the mind’s later contemplation of the materials laid up in the memory as a result of sense experience”
Travel, therefore, became an essential part of a person’s education. It was felt necessary to travel to gain more knowledge. Many young men from the upper classes took “The Grand Tour” of Europe, specially between 1660 and 1825 in order to acquire culture and comfort. “Travellers often had to walk long distances, sleep out in the open, or stay at flea-infested inns” (Fussell 130). The effects of mass travel were reflected in the texts produced in the century.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) was famous for the letters she wrote during her many travels abroad. The later female travel writers were influenced by her letters. *Turkish Embassy Letters* describes her life as an ambassador’s wife in Turkey. Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was born in Dublin on November 30, 1667. His *Gulliver’s Travels* is a satire par excellence. In it, Swift uses the earlier technique of allegory. In his time, there were endless conflicts between Whigs and Tories, between Catholics and Protestants, and between England and France. There were courtiers fighting with one another to win favours from George I. All these are represented allegorically in *Gulliver’s Travels*.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was born at Lichfield in 1709. His *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* is an account of his tour to the Hebrides with his friend Boswell in 1775. Laurence Sterne (1713-68) was the first writer to write on the Continent. *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) is a record of his Continental travel. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) wrote *Thomas Jefferson Travels: Selected Writings, 1784 – 89*. It is about his travels in France, Holland,
Germany and Italy. Johann Wolfgang Von Geothe’s (1743-1832) *Italienische Reise* (1816-17), Mary Wollstonecraft’s (1796-97) *A Short Residence in Sweden* (1796) and *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), and Jippensha Ikku’s (1765-1831) *Tokaidochu Hizakurige (The Shanke’s Mare)* are the important travel writings.

The nineteenth century, according to Fussell, “was the Bourgeois Age that defined the classic modern idea of travel as an excitement and a treat that established the literary genre of the travel book” (*The Norton Book of Travel* 273). The nineteenth century produced a large number of travel writers. Johann Gottfried Seume (1763-1810) published his *Spaziergang nach Syrakus* (1803). *Letters on Silesia: Written During a Tour Through That Country in the Years 1800, 1801, (1804)* is a notable work by John Quincy Adams (1767-1839). Lady Hester Stanhope (1776 - 1839) wrote *Memoirs of the Lady Hester Stanhope as related by herself in Conversations with her Physician* (1846) and *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope* (1847). Sir Henry Holland (1788-1873) brought out his *Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania, Thessalay, Macedonia &C., during the years 1812 and 1813* (1815). George Clemenceau published his *Au Pied du Sinai* (1898; new ed. 2000) and Jasmine Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) wrote *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland 1836, Gleanings in Europe: The Rhine 1836 and Gleanings in Europe: England 1837. Empire of the Czar: A Journey Through Eternal Russia* (1838) is a significant work by Marquis de Custine (1790-1857). *Reisebilder* (1826-33) and *Harzverise* (1853) by Heinrich Heine
Domestic Manners of the Americans (1832) by Francis Trollope (1797-1857). A Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia and Palestine in 1845-1846 by Isabella Francis Romer, Peregrinations of a Pariah (1838) and Promenades in London (1840) by Flora Tristan are some of the travel books. George Borrow (1803-81) wrote The Bible in Spain (1843) and Wild Wales (1862).

John Lloyd Stephen’s (1805-52) works include Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea and the Holy Land (1837), Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia and Poland (1838), Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan (1841) and Incidents of Travel in Yucatan (1843). Charles Darwin (1809-82) published his The Voyage of the Beagle in 1839. American Notes (1842) and Pictures from Italy (1845) are the two important works by Charles Dickens (1812-70). Herman Melville (1819-91) published his Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life (1846) and Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas (1846). The second text describes his experiences as a sailor in Polynesia. Isabella Bird (1831-1904) travelled widely and published several books on her travels. The English Woman in America (1856), The Hawaiian Archipelago (1875), The Golden Chersonese and Way Thither (1883), Korea and Her Neighbors (1898) and The Yangtze Valley and Beyond (1899) are her best known works.

Mark Twain (1835-1910) was a prolific writer. The Innocents Abroad (1869), Roughing It (1872), A Tramp Road (1880) and Following the Equator (1897) are some of his popular travel books. Henry James (1843-1916) was a grand writer. His
works are *A Little Tour in France* (1884), *English Hours* (1905), *The American Scene* (1907) and *Italian Hours* (1909). Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94) was born in Edinburgh. He travelled to far off places, partly to improve his failing health and partly to acquire new experiences. *An Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels With Donkey in the Cévennes* (1879) and *The Silverado Squatters* (1883) are the three remarkable travel pieces by him. J. Seaton Chase (1864-1923) wrote three books. They are *Yosemite Trails* (1911), *California Coast Trials* (1913) and *California Desert Trails* (1919). Nellie Bly (1864-1922) published *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* (1890).

W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), a great short story writer, wrote his *On a Chinese Screen* in 1922. D.H. Lawrence was born at Eastwood. He travelled extensively in Italy and Sicily, Ceylon and Australia, U.S.A. and Mexico, finally returning to Italy in 1928. Lawrence has also to his credit several travel books containing detailed descriptions about the countries he had visited. *Sea and Sardinia* is a remarkable work by the writer. Freya Stark is another important writer. He wrote eight books. *The Valleys of the Assassins* (1934), *The Southern Gates of Arabia: A Journey in the Hadhramaut* (1936), *Seen In the Hadhramaut* (1938), *A Winter in Arabia* (1940), *Ionia a Quest* (1954), *The Lycian Shore* (1956), *Alexander’s Path* (1958) and *Riding to the Tigris* (1959) are his significant works. Ernest Hemingway’s (1899-1961) *A Moveable Feast* was published posthumously in 1964.


The Dutch travel writer Cees Nooteboom (1933) has three works to his credit. They are, *Berlijnse Notities* (1990), *Roads to Santiago* (1992) and *Nootebooms Hotel* (2002) Bruce Chatwin (1940-89) published *In Patagonia* (1977) and *The


V.S Naipaul, Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh are the prominent, contemporary travel writers today. These writers seriously discuss the effects of diaspora, migration, exile, excursion and exploration on human beings. Contemporary travel books highlight the increasing cultural mix, cultural exchanges and hybridity in this “Multinational Age.” They explore in-depth the territories of the mind and redefines contours of nations and societies and fix the forms of political and cultural representation. With the steadily increasing multicultural societies, modern travel writers have shifted their focus from geographical spaces to “contact zones” to use Pratt’s phrase. Contemporary travel writers thematize “assimilation”, “acculturation”, and “transculturation”. They allow one to have a better understanding of the “mongrel,” mixed-up and multicultural societies. Travel literature as a lasting theme retains its inexhaustible interest in the hands of the seasoned and sophisticated Indian diasporic travel writers such as Dean Mahomed, V.S. Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, and Pico Iyer.

Dean Mahomed (1759-1851) was born in Patna, Bihar. He served in the East India Company’s Bengal Army, first as a camp follower and then as a sabaltern officer. Travelling widely in India, he observed the culture and society of the eighteenth century Colonial India. He immigrated to Ireland in 1784 at the age of twenty-five; married
an Anglo Irish woman there. Once again, he emigrated from Ireland to London, around 1807; settled in England, finally, in 1814. He published his first book *Travels of Dean Mahomed* in 1794. He enjoys a special reputation as the first Indian diasporic travel writer in English. He wrote his travelogue in order to represent his diasporic experience as an Indian immigrant. The book foregrounds his view of India and the West, and issues relating to his “hybridized” identity. Sudhir Kumar in his article “Writing India from the Margins: The Importance of Being Dean Mahomed” sums up:

Dean Mahomed’s *Travels* … remains a significant document that contains the idea of India inscribed, for the first time, through the diasporic imagination. Dean Mahomed’s diasporic consciousness traverses through the issue of exile, identity, homelessness, displacement, replacement, cultural and political empowerment, the role of myths, memories and metaphors in the construction of India – though imaginary yet vital to the enabling of a colonized subject. ....His deliberate act of choosing a colonial language, that is, English, and a passage to England to write India, may justifiably be read as a significant trope of the diasporic studies at present. (21-22)

Dean Mahomed, in fact, has accomplished a pioneering task through his travel narrative. His travelogue showcases the major features of national, cultural as well as diasporic consciousness in his representation of India. His contribution to the cultural or diasporic studies is highly a remarkable one.
World Literatures in English are now empowered and enriched by diasporic writers who address contemporary issues relating to identity politics. Indian writers of diaspora have greatly contributed to the enhancement of writings in English. V.S. Naipaul is one such great writer who contributed to the growth of West Indian literature and Literatures of the World. He was born in Trinidad of East Indian extraction in 1932, and left the island by the time he was eleven, and moved to Oxford in the 1950s for his studies. He then, stayed in London and started to write from there. Naipaul has published thirteen fictional works, several major works of non-fiction based on his travels and voyages across the globe. He has gained worldwide recognition by winning Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001.

Though Naipaul settled in England, remote places attracted him. He believed that travels to distant lands would provide him creative freshness and rejuvenation. Infact, as he expected, his voyages gave him a fresh dimension to his life and widened the dimension of his fictional world. He needed a new genre to explore his self or subjectivity. He turned to travel writing with his *The Middle Passage* (1962). It is considered a “Threshold text” (n.pag.) through which the writer inaugurated his career of travel writing. This new form served as an alternate mode to enrich his creative communication. The new countries he visited energized him immensely. His travels to Trinidad, India, Islamic World, and South America offered new kinds of experience. His curious mind observed everything around him to enquire, question, rejoice and reminiscence. As a travel narrative, *The Middle Passage* is about his reverse journey
to Trinidad as an “outsider.” In fact, he is both an “outsider” and “insider” to visit his birthplace after a gap of six years with a new perspective.

The ship [Francisco Bobadila] in which he travels becomes a metaphor at once to symbolise an expatriate’s movement. Constant mobility, in fact, is the feature of an expatriate’s life. On the ship, along with him, sail multi – cultured, various ethnic groups who remind him of the world of immigrants which is symbolic of the flux of the expatriate’s lives. Upon arriving his homeland, he observes that the Caribbean islands remained not much changed. Slavery has not come to an end. Slavery, he says, taught the black people self-contempt. He feels that slavery is one of the greatest evils humans can inflict on fellow beings. The people were still poor and the country has not prospered. He finds that no economic foundations have been created, the Calypso culture has been alienated and political and racial tensions exist. The writer describes his own people as “Mimic Men” who imitated the white people. He observes a vast emptiness and instability everywhere in Trinidad. Naipaul writes painfully that “for nothing was created in the West Indies, no civilization as in the Spanish America, no great revolution as in Haiti or the American Colonies” (The Middle Passage 27). He could notice only disillusionment in their lives. He accuses the blacks of mimicry.

In the Middle Passage, Naipaul does not just seem to report and document something. He rethinks and reflects upon his position and condition. The writer feels that he fails to identify himself with the people and the place. He expresses about his desire to leave the island soon. The author feels displaced in his own land. His return
journey to West Indies after six years ends in alienation and he could not feel a
closeness to his home country. Naipaul feels like an outsider there and Trinidad is not
“home” to him even after his longtime expatriacy in England.

*An Area of Darkness* (1964) is Naipaul’s second travelogue. It is true that
*The Middle Passage* served as a model for his future works. *An Area of Darkness*
imitates the model developed by him in *The Middle Passage*. Yet, he applies a different
formula in his second travel piece. It is a work of great introspective reflection. He
gives an account of his travels in India in the sixties. His visit to India was similar to
his visit to the West Indies. He arrives in India motivated by his desire to explore his
roots and to redefine his association and position with India. He failed to match his
‘self’ with the Caribbean islands. But he hopes to find his roots in India. Moreover,
the romantic picture of India, he recalls, has haunted him from his childhood. He
desires to examine quietly if his “dream India” could be his ‘name’ and ‘a home’ for
him now. He expects India to fulfil his dreams. The writer arrives to see India in its
best conditions. But Naipaul finds that Indians too, like his Trinidadians, are “Mimic
Men” as the ex-colonials. As in the Caribbean island, there is a continuous flux in
India, he remarks. He realizes that his initial assumptions about his “dream India” are
unreal. His double alienation comes to a full circle and is complete. He is an outsider
in Trinidad and in India as well, he tells. His position in India reminds him of his
ancestor’s passage from India who abandoned their motherland to leave as indentured
labourers. To him, he confirms, India is a country of darkness. India, to him, as he
puts:
Was a country out; in the void beyond the dot of Trinidad, and from it our journey had been final. It was a country suspended in time, it could not be related to the country discovered later... to me as a child the India that had produced so many of the persons and the thing around me was featureless, and I thought of the time when the transference was made as a period of darkness, darkness which also extended to the land... though time has widened, though space has contracted... which are no longer mine (An Area of Darkness 30).

Naipaul, in search of his roots, felt rootless. He continued to explore the possibilities of finding roots in the country. In Trinidad and India, Naipaul found that he was ‘different.’ He learned to live with a difference in India. Difference is the hallmark of post-modernism and the author has a claim to it; he is a “postmodern” in life. Though he lived in India for a year, he could not understand India at all. Naipaul comments on the technological advances in India and calls it an “intermediate technology.” He comments that India has not prospered with this technology. He observes:

Intermediate technology should mean a leap ahead, a leap beyond accepted solutions, new ways of perceiving, coincident needs and resources. In India it has circled back to something very like the old sentimentality about poverty and the old ways and has stalled with the bullock cart; a fascinating intellectual adventure for the people concerned, but sterile, divorced from reality and usefulness (An Area of Darkness 121).
Naipaul points out that such an intermediate technology is useless and not adequate. He finds a gap between application and utility. The writer seriously interacts with India on its attitudes. Yet, he finds him nowhere in India. His communications fail; his visit ends as a failure when he couldn’t reconcile with the actualities in India. He is unable to change his attitude towards India. He himself admits his inability to establish any link with the people of the nation. He tells that “I had learned my separateness from India, and was content to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors” (An Area of Darkness 252). He remarks, “India was part of the night, a dead world, a long journey” (An Area of Darkness 265). He couldn’t speak any of the Indian languages and so he struggled to communicate with the Indians. India abandones him and he returns to Beirut.

Naipaul visited India for the second time in 1975 and he wrote his second travelogue about India, titled India: A Wounded Civilization. The second visit happened during the time he wanted to travel as a tourist and inquire about India. He notes, “An inquiry about India, even an inquiry about emergency – has quickly to go beyond the political. It has to be an inquiry about Indian attitudes; it has to be an inquiry about the civilization itself” (India: A Wounded Civilization 9). Naipaul got disappointed during his second visit too. What he observes is that foreign attacks on the Indian civilization has left India with numerous wounds and the country remains a wounded civilization. The author catches its ruins and feels that the ruins multiplied with repeated cultural assaults on India. He writes about the riots which isolated Hindus and Muslims.
Naipaul has developed a mind that easily rejects cultures and nations wherever he visits. He feels part of no history and no nation. The writer remains unattached and unanchored. He seems to claim membership or nationality nowhere. The author accepts no culture as his own and no country as his home. It is true that his ‘expatriate sensibility’ is so strong and dominant in him. So that he could transcend all. He has developed this sensibility out of his stay in Trinidad and London as an immigrant. The writer feels comfortable with his expatriacy. He is at home in expatriacy.

After his short travels to India, Naipaul travelled to the Islamic countries for six months [August 1979 – February 1980]. This new and unfamiliar lands offered enough source to write his next travelogue called Among The Believers which he published in 1981. The book emerged as yet another controversial book followed by his severe criticism of Caribbean and Indian societies in his travel writings such as The Middle Passage, An Area of Darkness and India: A Wounded Civilization.

The idea of travelling to the Islamic Worlds such as Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia came to him during the Iranian Revolution. He was in the U.S.A at that time. He came to know more about the happenings in Iran through media. With the overthrow of Shah from power in 1979, Marxist ideology began to spread in Iran. The book studies the changing Iran, the process of the modernizing revolution and the effects of the revolution in the Islamic nations such as Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. He traces the origin and rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in his book. The
countries he visited were in a state of turmoil. Teheran had American hostages. Afghanistan was overrun by Soviet Union. There was martial rule in Pakistan.

The main issue Naipaul analyses in this travelogue is the rise of Muslim Fundamentalism and the inevitable transformation amidst flux and chaos. A lot of people were leaving Iran and began to float elsewhere. The main reason for their migration was that many could not reconcile the two opposing forces - tradition and modernity. Iranians were caught between “their ancient culture and the new civilization” Naipaul observes, “whether they moved forward into the new civilization or back like Suryadi’s daughter, towards the purer Arabic faith, they were now always entering into somebody else’s world, and getting future from themselves....” (India: A Wounded Civilization 399).

Naipaul observed that the people divided with the inevitable advent of the Western technological civilization and further divided in their opinions. Naipaul’s narrative becomes stronger with his account of his meetings and encounters with hotel workers, guides, interpreters, important personalities and people in the newspaper offices. One such meeting he has is with Parvez, a good Shia who sends his son to the U.S.A, while his own paper where he works criticises materialist civilizations. Parvez was a “divided” self and like him the writer finds that the entire Islamic nations divided. Parvez is a stranger to himself who wishes to continue to belong to himself as far as he could. At the same time his mind recognizes the New World to which his sons belong. Naipaul claims that the situation of Parvez is the reflection of the sensibility
of the Iranians. “It was in that division of the whole mind that the Islamic revolution had begun in Iran. And it was there that it was ending,” the writer puts (India: A wounded Civilization 397-398).

Naipaul views that Islam is not a ‘monolith’. It concentrates on the major branches of Islam, the succession issue after the fall of Shah, and Islam’s resurgent operations. Naipaul doesn’t look at it as an abstract ideology too. He views that it is related to a social order and legal concepts. He opines that the construction of a polity on the National lines, neglecting the Islam’s concepts is unthinkable in Iran. He thinks that such fundamentalism is not ideal, and he firmly believes that it yields nothing. He visualizes only a disorder, or a turmoil emerging out of such a faith. At the end of Among The Believers he voices, “... in Iran and elsewhere men would have to make their peace with the world which they existed beyond the faith...” (India: A wounded Civilization 398-99). He seems to tell that the people of the Islamic World have to rise above their faith to establish peace and unity. His book, though it has some shortcomings or deficiencies, is a significant document of historical and sociological value in projecting contemporary actualities.

A Turn in the South (1989) is about his visits to South American countries. Like his other works, this travel book probes into the nature of civilization. He focuses on South America’s resistance to modernization and enquires about how the Southern black people learnt to assimilate and adapt to the sweeping changes that have been coming over the country. The writer highlights the lives of the whites and the blacks
in South America where they both live together. He quotes the observation of Hetty Howard’s mother. She observes, “Black people, there, Black people there, white people there, Black people, black people, white people. All this side black people, all this side white people, White people white people, black people, white people” (A Turn in the South 10).

To Naipaul, South America is a land of voices, various people speaking with wonderment and passion and hope of their lives on the land and in the cities. He writes about the black and the white people who come from different backgrounds and belong to various classes; former politicians, preachers, agitators and so on. It is a vibrant place to him with new life. He touches upon several happenings and episodes which make his narration a lively account and a potential book about South America. The author writes about slavery in the South. He writes with great pain that “A slave is a slave: a master need not think of humiliating or tormenting him. In the hundred years after the end of slavery, the black man was tormented in the South in ways that I never knew about until I began to travel in the region” (A Turn in the South 119). This is his perspective as an outside traveller. He shows his compassion towards the slaves everywhere and his global consciousness is evident here.

After completing his journey in South American countries, Naipaul came to India once again between 1988-90. He wrote one more travelogue entitled India: A Million Mutinies after his third visit. It was published in the year 1990. In the book Naipaul revisits his earlier ideas and perspectives on India. He is now aware of his
shortcomings and inadequacies. His eye catches the improvements in India after the Independence. His interviews and meetings with people offer him fruitful insights. The pessimistic Naipaul turns as an optimistic person. This journey set right his attitude. He sheds his “indian nerves.” He feels that the darkness that isolated him from his ancestral past disappeared. India was an area of darkness to him during his first visit to India. He found India as a wounded civilization during his second visit. But his *India : A Million Mutinies* has grown from pessimism to optimism. The darkness which he felt encircled is removed gradually and there are streaks of a new light. Earlier he travelled with a fixed perspective. He writes, “I had carried in my bones that idea of abjectness and defeat and shame. It was the idea I had taken to India on that slow journey by train in 1962. It was the source of my nerves” (*India : A Million Mutinies* 516-17). He finds that India has remade itself and has prospered well. India was pulsating with new energy and new life. He gathered multiple voices on India through his interactions and meetings with people. Naipaul arrives at his own conclusion finally. He says that “there was in India now what didn’t exist 100 years before; a central will, a central intellect, a national idea. The Indian union was greater than the sum of its parts the states were a part of the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India’s growth, part of the restoration” (*India : A Million Mutinies* 511-512). Naipaul expresses optimistically and positively through the passage and it reveals his revised and new vision of India. He is impressed by India’s growth and restoration after the Independence.
Naipaul’s travelogues launched a new genre of the travel writing which is a blend of various genres and trends, and patches of comedy. Above all, there is the voice of Naipaul, a transcontinental, expatriate world traveller and writer. His Trilogy on India received praise from the Third World for his vision of the Third World countries, though there were imperialistic biases, personal prejudices and faulty views. At the same time one can’t dismiss his insightful perspectives and opinions. His travel writings show that his expatriate sensibility is dominant in his voice and seems to declare that he has no country to belong and he doesn’t belong anywhere. He is homeless, and is travelling always because he belongs nowhere. Rootlessness is his condition. All the landscapes are alien to him. He admits that he has no homes to return to; he embraces the homeless state. He discovered in The Middle Passage that he was not a West Indian. In An Area of Darkness, he says, “I was not English or Indian; I was denied the victories of both” (40). He is the total stranger, neither Indian, West Indian, nor English. He is a cosmopolitan and is not rooted anywhere.

Another master of craft in travel writing is Vikram Seth (1952-) He was born in Calcutta in 1952. He spent his childhood years in Patna. He had his schooling at the prestigious Doon School. He moved to Oxford University for his undergraduation. He earned a degree in philosophy, politics, and economics. He was a student of Economics at Stanford University, California. The writer now lives in Delhi. In the early 1980s, from 1980-82, Seth was in China, at Nanjing University for his field work on the economic demographics of Chinese poetry and the language. His visit to
China resulted in the memorable works such as *From Heaven Lake*: Travels through Sinking and Tibet in 1983 and The Humble Administrator’s Garden, Three Chinese Poets in 1992.

*From Heaven Lake* is Seth’s accounts of his journey through Mainland China to Lhasa to Kathmandu to Delhi. The book has been considered one of the important travel writings of modern times. Ujwala Patil rightly observes, “Seth makes an art of travelling in *From Heaven Lake* and expands one’s awareness into realization of how the soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases” (41). He received Thomas Cook Travel Book Award in 1993 for the book.

The book opens with a colourful portrait of Tibet. The surrounding Tibet’s outstanding glamour, upon his arrival in China, especially in Tibet, fascinated him. He was enthralled by the waterfalls of Nilamu and describes it as “bright silver in the noon light” (*The Heaven Lake* 149). The enchanting scene evoked in him a mood for poetry and philosophy. He meditates on water and his pen pours out excellent passages. The passages showcase Seth’s interest in poetry, philosophy, art and painting. The writer enriches his narrative with lengthy description of scenes of nature and other aspects of human and natural environment. He writes about “terraced fields of rice, banana trees, flame of the forest, champa ... a piece of indigo – coloured paper fluttering by the side of the path . . . . Two women in bright saris walk through the emerald fields and shops that are full of “brilliantly coloured cloth and bangles” (*From Heaven Lake* 172). He notices the boys who drive the donkey – carts on with cries of ‘Kirrik!
Kirrik! (From Heaven Lake 71). The author develops an intimacy with the Chinese people during his travels and interacts much more closely with them. Though he travelled for pleasure, adventure and for romance, he even bursts forth into “a romantic lamentation,” to use Ujwal Patil’s phrase, when he sympathises with Mr. Ho. Seth tells, “I feel sympathetic towards Mr. Ho [a foreign officer in Lhasa] who has been disturbed by an impoverished and importunate Waibin ... who hasn’t even reported to the police yet”(From Heaven Lake 113).

This shows the writer’s sorrow and pity for the sufferings of another person. As it was mentioned earlier, he won the hearts of many people in China. For example, when the hotel owner at Heaven Lake wanted to warn the author not to swim in the lake, he did not like to tell about the possible danger directly. Instead, he gave examples of persons like a Beijing athlete who drowned earlier in the lake. The hotel owner’s concern for him surprised the writer. Sui, the driver of the Liberation truck who took Seth to Lhasa was a good friend of him. Though Sui’s “phlegmatic behaviour”(n.pag.) irritated Seth, his affection for Sui is evident when they both last meet in a street in Lhasa. Their meeting is really poignant. Both of them express their sharp feeling of sadness. Besides Sui, there are numerous other European student friends who deeply feel for the departure of Seth. The writer gives Quzha, the unit leader who helps him get a lift, and Norbu, his Tibetan mate, their due in his book. Nandhini Chandra rightly puts, “Friendship alone can transcend these nationalistic barriers”(29). The author himself tells, “When I think of China, I think first, of my friends and only then of Quin
Shi Huang’s tomb”(*From Heaven Lake* 36). The writer is quite different and he remembers his friends and others he met in China.

His narration includes a comment on the superstitious beliefs of the Napalese. He writes that he was told of “A small shrine half protrudes from the stone platform on the river bank. When it emerges fully, the goddess inside will escape, and the evil period of the Kaliyug will end on earth”(*From Heaven Lake* 174). The Western educated cosmopolitan Seth reports about the belief of the people in the “orientalised terrain,” to borrow Nadhini Chandra’s phrase (26). He notes down their rituals and customs. The sight of the chopping and mincing of the body, feeding of the flesh and bones to the eagles and the battering of the skull was a shock to the writer. Pico Iyer also in his *Video Night in Kathmandu* records this Tibetan ritual in the book. He writes:

YET THE GREATEST of all the sights in the Holy City, according to the wisdom of the Banak Shol, was the sacred rite known as the Celestial Burial. Each morning, at dawn, on a hillside... the bodies of the newly dead were placed on a huge, flat rock. There a shurdy local man, dressed in a white apron and armed with a large cleaver, would set about hacking them into pieces. Assistants would grind the bones. When at last the corpses had been reduced to strips of bloody flesh, they were left on the Promethean stone for the vultures. For Tibetan Buddhists, the ritual was a sacrament, a way of sending corpses back into the cycle of Nature, of removing all traces of the departed. For the visitors who
had begun to congregate in larger and still large numbers to watch the man they called “the Butcher,” the rite was the last word in picturesque exoticism ...” ([VNIK 75]).

According to Seth, it is not an act of barbarism. But it is very clear that “wood is scarce and the ground hard for much of the year” to allow for burials or cremations ([From Heaven Lake 150]). When “a gaggle of onlookers” giggled and whispered, ([VNIK 75]), the writer distances himself from the gossiping crowd and shows his respect for the spectacle. The writer thus, notes down the Tibetan’s strange religious rights and customs.

The author’s lengthy analysis of the Cultural Revolution and its impact on the people of China and Tibet exposes his talent for creating serious situations. The accounts of army camps and of Yaks in Southern Quinghal are obvious examples. His sense of loss is evident when he looks at the beautiful temples and mosques and the religious sites that were demolished during the Cultural Revolution. He gives instances of the Chinese Persecution of the minorities, excessive bureaucracy and massacres during the Revolution days. Seth takes the readers to hotels and restaurants where both educated and uneducated workers and professionals eat together. He takes the readers on a tour of markets, shops, embassies and market squares. One such spectacular sight is that a date seller’s son sings with a student from Italy.

The markets he shows are overcrowded with visitors and locals; he draws out the craze for wristwatches, cameras and other consumer goods. His portrayal is not
free from a sense of humour and intelligent wit too. He shares with the readers an experience he underwent at the Shuang Mec Lou Hotel in Nanjing. This incident provokes laughter and humour that is uncontrollable. He tells how he was stopped by a guard because of his “haricut” and “Chinese spectacles.” The guard mistook him as a comrade. He asked him many questions: “Did you hear me? What unit are you from? You can’t go there,” etc. and when the guard comes closer, Seth says, “he looks abashed, but I am pleased with my loss of hair and gain of spectacles, I do not now appear emphatically un-Chinese. If I need to stress my foreignness, I will fiddle with the knobs on my digital watch” (From Heaven Lake 34). The book has numerous such instances which provide enjoyment of dramatic depiction. One of the strengths of his travelogue is that it has many interesting and pleasant conversations and dialogues. Seth’s camera sharp eye has snapped almost all. It is full of acute observations, insightful images and minute descriptions which tell upon his keen alertness and unfailing interest to know what he knows not.

“Kathmandu; Delhi”, the last chapter of From Heaven Lake, describes his homecoming. He visited the two most sacred temples – Pashupatinath and Baudunath stupa. At Pashupatinath, a sacred Hindu temple, he sighted priests, hawkers, devotees, tourists, cows, monkeys, pigeons and dogs that roamed through the area. He noticed the “saffron – clad Westerners” who struggled to get permission to enter the temple. He was enchanted by the holy Bagmati river that flowed below. At the Baudunath stupa, the Buddhist shrine, silence descended. “At the Baudunath temple ... there is, in contrast,
a sense of stillness,” he writes (From Heaven Lake 338). There were small shops that were owned by Tibetan immigrants. The shops sold Western cosmetics and Nepalese antiques. Indian currency was accepted on the streets. The writer was attracted by a fluteseller there. His analytical sketch of the flute player shows his interest in music. He has a good knowledge and sense of music. The writer mentions about ‘the reed neh’, ‘the deep bansuri of Hindustani classical music,’ ‘the clear or breathy flutes of South America’ and the high-pitched Chinese flutes.’ Arriving at the airport to reach his home in Delhi, he recalls everything. He could see himself standing outside the police station at Turfan. He thinks about his journey; he recalls all that took place there. He recites the names such as Turfan, Urumqi, Liuyuan, Dunhuang, Nanhu Germu, Naqu, Lhasa, Shigaste, Nilamu, Zhangmu, Lamasangu, Kathmandu. But along with these names he remembers Quzha, Sui and Norbu. They mean even more to him.

This shows his compassion and love, and he is more respectful of the friendly spirit he encounters everywhere in China. Finally, he emphasizes on international relations. He is disturbed by the friction between India and China. He insightfully suggests, “If India and China were amicable towards each other, almost half the world would be at peace. Yet, friendship rests on understanding” (From Heaven Lake 177). He expects peace to blossom between the two countries. He says, peace can be achieved through “respectful patience on either side as in, for instance, trying to solve the border problem” (From Heaven Lake 177). His travels in China discover for him the understanding that the conflicts are “the faults of governments ....” (From Heaven
Lake 36). Seth is committed to peace and peaceful means to end up the tension in the India – China border.

Even though the writer is driven by no specific consideration he travels for the romance of it and this travelogue is brilliantly written throughout. His active mind collects interesting and entertaining incidents and episodes which are infact, informative and illuminating. His unbiased reportage is an added strength to the book. Critics and academia around the world try to position him and prefer to fit him into certain categories. But, as Prasad observes, “He is not bothered about the diasporic dislocations or the search for roots ... “he doesn’t feel dislocated or uprooted” (15). As Nandini Chandra observes, “Seth travels his own course” with a free spirit (16). He positions himself transnationally and does not engage with the question of rootedness and belonging. Prasad writes that in a television interview with Meenakshi Mukherjee, “he has said that he was just a writer not an Indian or a Commonwealth or any other kind of writer. . .”(15). The world belongs to him; he is priviledged and fortunate enough to be able to travel widely and make the universe his own. He is truly the first transnational writer to explore various locations, themes and styles. He sets his writings in different locations. “If The Golden Gate is “pure” California, A Suitable Boy is North India, and An Equal Music is European,” Prasad eloquently puts (15). The world belongs to Vikram Seth. He is a brilliant writer and he continues to enchant the world with his magnificent narratives.
Amitav Ghosh (1956-) is one of the most important writers of the contemporary times. He is an anthropologist, sociologist, novelist, essayist and travel writer. He was born in Calcutta on 11th July, 1956. He grew up in East Pakistan, in Sri Lanka, Iran and India. He attended the Doon School in Dehra Dun and then received a BA in History from St. Stephen’s College, Delhi University, in 1976 and an MA in Sociology from the University in 1978. He got a diploma in Arabic from the Institut Bourguiba de Langues Vivantes, Tunisia, in 1979. And then a Dphil. [PhD] in Social Anthropology from Oxford University in 1982. He went to Egypt to do a field work in the village of Lataifa. He was a visiting Professor of Anthropology at the University of Virginia, the University of Pennsylvanina, the American University in Cairo Columbia University, Hardvard University and Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at Queens College of the City University of New York. He lives in New York with his wife, Deborah Baker and their children, Leela and Nayan. He spends part of each year in Calcutta.

Amitav Ghosh is a prolific writer today. He has numerous works of fiction and non-fiction to his credit. He published his first novel Circle of Reason in 1986. The Shadow Lines, In an Antique Land, Calcutta Chromosome, The Glass Palace, The River of Smoke and The Hungry Tide are his important novels. His non-fictional writings now constitute a formidable collection on their own, comprised of Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma (1998), Count Down (1999) and The Imam and the Indian: Prose Pieces (2002). He is a keen world traveller. He has travelled
extensively to India, Bangladesh and England for his *The Shadow Lines*; Indian and Egypt for his *In an Antique Land*; India, Burma and Malaysia for his *The Glass Palace* and *Dancing in Combodia, At Large in Burma*. His writings convey a ‘sense of place’ and sense of dislocation. His books are international from the start. Ghosh’s imagination is as necessarily diasporic as it is postcolonial, being a product of specific histories of the subcontinental in the present century. Travelling comes naturally to him. All his books are travel based. In an interview with Neluka Silva and Alex Tickell, the writer tells, “travelling is always some way connected with my fictional work. It is a close link, I would say” (215).

*Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma* (1998) is a pure travelogue. It is a collection of three essays titled as “Dancing in Combodia,” “Stories in Stones” and “At Large in Burma” which were previously published in *Granta* 44 (summer of 1993), *The Observer* and *The New Yorker* in 12 August, 1996. In the book the writer’s chief concerns are the current political crisis in Burma and Cambodia, and the maintenance of cultural heritage. In her review of *Dancing in Combodia At Large in Burma* for *India Star*, Meenakshi Mukherjee observes, . . . “In *Dancing in Combodia*, travel, history, cultural, commentary, political reportage shade into one another, the whole premeated with ruminations on freedom, power, violence and pain. Other histories and other geographies come alive and align with our own through Ghosh’s translucent prose” (4).
The first essay in the book contains several illustrations by the French artist August Rodin from his encounter with the dancers who are the subject of Ghosh’s essay. It describes the writer’s tendency to illustrate bold historical themes through simple individual meetings. The book interweaves, in fact, two historical encounters. The first is the visit of King Sisowath of Cambodia to Marseilles in 1906 with his several dozen princes, courtiers, officials, and most importantly a troupe of nearly a hundred traditional classical dancers and musicians from his royal palace at Phnom Penh. King Sisowath was the last king of Cambodia before Pol Pot took over the country. The second is the writer’s visit to Cambodia in search of Pol Pot’s sister-in-law, who was said to be one of the country’s greatest dancers. She was, in fact, a national treasure.

The journey of King Sisowath was the outcome of his long dream to visit the land of the colonizers i.e., France. His journey started and he was abroad with his men and women. The King and his group were so happy to undertake the trip. The writer tells, “The King, who had been crowned two years before, had often spoken of his desire to visit France, and for him the voyage was the fulfilment of a lifelong dream (Dancing in Cambodia 1). For others too it was a good opportunity to step out of their country to free them their “cloistered existence” (n.pag.) It was a cherished opportunity for them to perform for the colonizers at the exhibition organized on the theme of France’s colonial possessions. Ghosh writes:
It was said that the dancers entered the palace as children and spent their lives in seclusion ever afterwards; that their lives revolved entirely around the royal family, that several were the King’s mistresses and had even borne him children, that some of them had never stepped out of the palace grounds until this trip to France.” (*Dancing in Combodia 3*)

The writer sensitively portrays the colonized situation of the dancers. Their excitement and joy at visiting the colonized land have been delicately described. King Sisowath’s eldest daughter princess Soumphady accompanied the excited dancers as their guide and head. This elegant lady with her royal manner and style impressed the audience at Marseille. She admired the French women, their clothes and head dresses but she never desired to dress up like the French women. She was the symbol of Burmese culture. As Shubha Tiwari puts, “She was her own woman. A woman of substance, we might call her” (69). When she was asked to wear like the French women she declines and says, “No! I am not used to them and perhaps would not know how to wear them” (*Dancing in Combodia 5*). The writer highlights the Cambodian women’s sense of pride about their distinctive dress suited for the variety of their performances.

Ghosh learns about past events and other aspects of Pol Pot regime through Chea-Samy, a sister-in-law of Pol Pot, and Princess Soumphady who is in-charge of the dancers. Chea - Samy tells the author about the tyrannical rule of Pol Pot from 1975 to 78 and the turmoil thereafter. Ghosh meets the members of Pol Pot family.
He attempts to study the impact of Pol Pot’s despotic regime on Cambodia. When Chea-Samy was a child, dance was one of the few means by which a commoner could gain entry into the palace. She was taken there in 1925 when she was six. When King Sisowath died in 1927, his son’s favourite mistress named Luk Khuan Meak, who was a dancer, brought several of her own village people, including Chea-Samy’s future husband and his brother known as Saloth Sar. Saloth Sar was later to be known only as Pol Pot. He received a scholarship and studied Electronics in Paris in 1949. He associated himself with several well-known leftists and communists there. Upon his arrival at Cambodia after three years, he started working for the Indochina Communist Party and he became its General Secretary in 1962. In 1963 he disappeared, and returned to Cambodia again as Pol Pot, when Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia. Pot Pot came to power in 1975. As soon as he took power, he began to implement his plans and Cambodia changed through his ruthless means. Those who acted against his views were punished. He caused the deaths of two million Cambodians. Ghosh brings out the scenes of Cambodia’s killing fields and rewinds the painful stories of the unfortunate Cambodians.

In 1979, the Vietnamese put an end to Pol Pot’s regime. The Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died of heart attack in April 1998 at the age of seventy-two. During his despotic rule, as many as ninety percent of the country’s pre-revolution artists were killed. As Ghosh puts it:
It was a war on history itself, an experiment in the reinvention of society. No regime in history had even before made so systematic and sustained an attack on the middle class. Yet, if the experiment was proof of anything at all, it was ultimately of the indestructibility of the middle class, of its extraordinary tenacity and resilience; its capacity to preserve its forms of knowledge and expression through the most extreme kinds of adversity. 

*(Dancing in Combodia 10)*

Ghosh draws this conclusion because many of the survivors had to invent imaginary histories for themselves during Pol Pot’s rule in order to avoid extermination. The middle class struggled a lot to sustain their identity. At the same time, it was a period of reconstruction of their artistry and culture. As Ghosh tells, “they had to start from the beginning, literally, like ragpickers, pieceing their families, their roof, their lives together from the little that was left” *(Dancing in Combodia 18)*. “They began to create the means of denying Pol Pot his victory” in reinventing Combodia’s culture (18).

The writer blames the French to have picked up the madman Pol Pot. Yet Ghosh brings to limelight the hidden agenda of the Khmer Rouge. They targeted Combodia’s Vietnamese minority through their racist nationalism. He quotes the dictator’s brother’s words who believed that all the troubles started when Saloth Sar [“Pol Pot”] left to Paris for his terrible graduation in Electronics Engineering. The author then compares Pol Pot and King Sisowath and broadens his view still further. “The trip to France was,” writes Ghosh:
The dream of the whole life, evidently cast King Sisowath’s mind into the same kind of turmoil, the same tumult of shock and bewilderment that has provoked generations of displaced students – The Gandhi’s the Senghor’s and the Kenyatta’s amongst thousand of their less illustrious countrymen, to close their door upon the cold unfamiliarity of wintry Western cities and lock themselves into their rooms to pour their hearts out in letters recording their impressions for those they had left at home. (Dancing in Combodia 39)

The émigrés the author mentions are entirely different from Pol Pot. Pol Pot spent a lot of his time thinking and writing. He shared very few of his thoughts with his family members. He ignored even his own brother. He was occupied with the fundamentalist vision of social change. His ideas of social change were shaped by his early days he spent among the hill tribes known as Khmers who resided in remote northeastern Cambodia. They were self-sufficient and lived a sort of ideal community life. Their culture was not affected by Buddhism. They had no concept of money. Pol Pot liked their ideal life and it was the attachment, perhaps, with his childhood that resulted in all that violence, atrocities, bloodshed and horror. The boy “who gave no trouble at all,” to quote Chea - Samy’s words, turned Combodia into killing fields. The author finds fault with King Sisowath for having chosen the opposite path towards social change. He abolished his culture and asked his countrymen to imitate French technology. Ghosh aptly concludes that “no one is likely to thank” King Sisowath for his “accommodating attitude” towards the colonizer (Dancing in Combodia 42).
The author ends his essay happily with a remark that the dance tradition that King Sisowath had brought to Marseilles was restored to its former glory in 1988. Ghosh creates the impact of music on the mind of the reader through his book and describes the worth of art. To the Cambodians, “to live is to sing and dance” (n.pag.). Their art forms gave the Cambodians an identity and confidence.

Ghosh’s contact with the old women such as Chea-Samy gives him better understanding of Burmese culture and history. Ghosh writes:

Like everyone around her, Chea-Samy too had started all over again – at the age of sixty, with her health shattered by the years of famine and hard labour. Working with quite, dagged persistence, she and a handful of other dancers and musicians slowly brought together a ragged half starved bunch of orphans and castaways, and with the discipline of their long, rigorous years of training they began to resurrect the art that Princess Soumphady and Luk Khum Meat – had passed on to them in that long ago world, when King Sisowath reigned out of the ruins around them they began to create the means of denying Pol Pot his victory (Dancing in Combodia 18).

Ghosh snapshots the sufferings of the women during the Pol Pot’s rule. He listens to their terrible tales and feels sad. He trusts their version and sympathizes with women. Through such touching passages the readers come to understand about the worth of the old people. They are the embodiment of the living tradition. Ghosh succeeds in his narration through many such passages in the travelogue.
The second essay entitled “Stories in Stone,” is devoted to the description of Angkor Wat, the twelfth-century Cambodian temple. It was discovered by French explorer Henri Michael in the nineteenth century. The architectural wonder reveals an important political message. It reminds a phase of decolonization and reflects the glorious past. Ghosh visits the temple and describes this building as “a Monument to the Power of the Story” (*Dancing in Cambodia* 54). Many stories are carved in on these grand structures. Cambodians call Angkor Wat, ‘A Monument to the Power of the Story.’ It is the largest single religious edifice in the world. Ghosh is also fascinated by its setting and dimensions. The setting is Mountain Meru which is a mountain in Indian mythology. People around the world look at Angkor Wat as a unique powerful symbol of the romance of lost civilizations, “of lost glory, devoured by time” (*Dancing in Cambodia* 56). But it is a symbol of modernity for the Cambodian people.

Ghosh learns about the legend of accidental finding of this temple by the French explorer Henri Michael. He further comes to know that the temple was restored using all latest available scientific and technical methods. Indian archaeologists were also involved for the restoration of the temple. Thus, this cultural symbol of Cambodia becomes the symbol of modernity. Ghosh writes:

For an entire generation of Cambodians, including politicians as different in ideology as Prince Sihanouk, Son Sann and Pol Pot, Angkor Wat became a symbol of modernizing nation – state. It became an icon that represented a break with the past – a token of the country’s belongings, not within the medieval,
but rather the contemporary world. Thus, the bear, banks, airlines and of course flags.” (Dancing in Combodia 60)

Ghosh mentions about their crazy to reproduce its image as a logo on each and every product. The image is stamped on beers, flags, airlines, military uniforms, banks, etc. Ghosh noticed the popularity of the temple among the Cambodians and the people of the world.

The third essay in the book, “At Large in Burma,” is a reflection on the author’s three meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of General Aung San. Her father General Aung San had led the Anti-Fascist people’s Freedom League to a great victory in the 1947 election. But he was assassinated before he took office. San Suu Kyi was just two years old at that time. After the assassination of her father in 1947, she emerged as an eminent human rights activist and led a peaceful non-resistance mass movement for restoring peace, rights and democracy in her country. She is equated with Gandhi and Nelson Mandella being a symbol of freedom, endurance and self-reliance. In 1980, the writer and Aung San Suu Kyi were students at Oxford, and Ghosh remembers her “leading a life of quiet, exiled domesticity on a leafy street in North Oxford, bringing up two sons, then aged seven and three, and writing occasional articles for scholarly journals” (Dancing in Combodia 75). He was surprised to see her photograph which appeared in a magazine eight years later. Their first encounter was more than a meeting. His second and third meetings with her were in late 1995, when he attended two public meetings that she organized. These were first conducted during the house
arrest that had been imposed in 1989. It was then lifted in 1995. She was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in absentia, in 1991. When he met her in 1995, the writer was surprised by the public manner of the benign lady. She was not too serious then. He laughed a lot. His third meeting with her in 1996 suggested that something had changed. He was so careful to answer his questions and not at all light-hearted.

Ghosh in this chapter discusses the struggle for democracy in Burma and analyses the political situation in the century, and in today’s world as well. According to him, politics is a matter of symbols. Strong symbols remain in the history of a world and they will be remembered forever. He assesses the dedication, the determination and the commitment of Suu Kyi and elevates her as a greatest political symbol and Ghosh aptly writes:

In the post-modern world, politics is everywhere a matter of symbol and the truth is that Suu Kyi is her own greatest political asset. It is only because Burma’s 1998 democratcy movement had a symbol, personified in Suu Kyi, that the world remembers it and continues to exert pressure on the current regime. Otherwise, the world would almost certainly have forgotten Burma’s slain and dispersed democrats just as quickly as it has forgotten many others like them in the past. (Dancing in Cambodia 83)

Ghosh turns as an analyst of local and world politics. He writes in detail Su Kyi’s involvement in the politics of her troubled country. Ghosh is interested in tracing
Burma’s past and recent history. Burma had been the most developed country in the region, but when Ghosh visited it had become one of the United Nation’s ten least developed nations on earth, even after fifty long years.

While Ghosh was in Burma, he decided to visit the Karenni, one of the smallest groups in the country who had been seeking freedom and some form of independence. But they were chased by the military. “There are five major Karenni refugee camps and together they form a minuscule, tight-knit nation - on the move, consisting of some six thousand people” (Dancing in Combodia 95). The writer asks himself this question: “What does it take. . . to sustain an insurgency for fifty years, to go fighting a war that the rest of world has almost forgotten?” (Dancing in Combodia 93). The writer does not seem to give a fully satisfying answer to this question that many ask these days. He says that those who involved in the conflict have forgotten the sources of their grievance and they have simply accepted to go by their current lives. Many others still remember the promises made to them by the British that were not fulfilled by the subsequent Burmese governments. Ghosh draws rather a surprising conclusion in this matter. Burma is, he writes:

. . . the product of a capricious colonial history. But colonial officials can not be reasonably be blamed for the arbitrariness of the lines they drew. All boundaries are artificial; there is no such thing as a ‘natural’ nation, which had journeyed through history with its boundaries and ethic composition intact. In a region as heterogeneous as South – East Asia, any boundary is sure to be
arbitrary. On balance, Burma’s best hopes for peace lie in maintaining intact the larger and more inclusive entity in history, albeit absentmindedly, bequeathed to its population almost half a century ago. *Dancing in Combodia* 100

Ther readers might be disappointed by the writer’s overall conclusion in this matter. But the solution that is offered by him is very practical. Ghosh has in mind the arbitrary nature of every border today with the collapsing and disappearance of borders due to mass travel and increased movements in the post-modern world. He opines that inclusiveness harmony and tolerance alone will end up many of the problems of the people today.

The three chapters in the little book, though titled differently are closely linked and interwoven. The writer has created an intriguing story by skillfully interweaving fictional and historic events. Shubha Tiwari rightly says, “Ghosh is a master ... in weaving words”(69). An attempt to change or replace his words and phrases is not at all a possibility. The writer’s conversations with the associates of Pol Pot, Chea - Samy and his meetings with Suu Kyi can be taken as a major and effective research device adopted by the writer to learn about Cambodia’s political history through the ages. And in particular, his three meetings with Suu Kyi revealed to him the greatness of her who remained as a beacon of hope during troubled times. She tells Ghosh, “I have always told you [...] that we will [...] that we will establish democracy in Burma and I stand by that, but as to when, I cannot predict. I’ve always said that to you” *(Dancing in Combodia* 113-114). The world awaited to see her wish fulfilled and to
acknowledge her firm belief. Her generation stood to gain with the fulfilment of her lifelong dream. This enthralling travelogue becomes a metaphor of the contemporary era and an allegorical political message for all multi-cultural, multi-racial, nation-states striving for existence in the postmodern world. No nation can live or develop in isolation when technological revolution has made the world “a global village.” The writer seems to suggest that a sense of inclusiveness rather than withdrawal is the ideal state of mind in the changing times.

The twenty-first century has produced great masters in the field of the literature of travel and exploration. Pico Iyer (1957-) is one such elegant and formidable travel writer now. He is a British – born Indian writer. The author was born in Oxford to Raghavan N.Iyer, an Oxford Philosopher and Theosophist, and Nadini Iyer, a religious scholar and teacher of mysticism. The writer’s actual first name is Stephen Robert. Pico was a family moniker that was taken from an Italian Philosopher, Giovanni Pico della. His unusual name is thus, a combination of Buddha’s name - Sidhartha, the Renaissance mystic Mirandola and his caste Iyer. When he was eight years old, his family moved from Bombay to California. His parents were academics. Iyer’s father taught Philosophy at Oxford. He won academic scholarship and studied at Eton, Oxford and Harvard. The writer grew up in England and California. He graduated in English literature with a Congratulatory Double First at Oxford and finished with a highest score in the University. The author taught literature at Harvard University until he joined *Time*. He took up his new career as a writer of world affairs with *Time* in 1982.
The writer is a contributing Editor at Conde Naste Traveler, Civilization, and Tricycle. His articles, reviews and journalistic pieces appear often in Harper’s, The New York Times, The New York Review of Books, Sports Illustrated T.L.S and many other publications. Travelling is not new to him. For more than a decade he moved back and forth several times a year between schools and college in England while his parents’ adopted home in California. As a writer on World Affairs for Time, he has travelled extensively from North Korea to Easter Island, and from Paraguay to Ethiopia. The author has covered Asian countries, most of the Western countries and a few countries in the Middle East. He splits his time between his “alien homes” - California and Japan. The writer lives with his Japanese wife and “her” two children now.

influences on humans. His works decipher the dream life of globalization and signal the Global World to usher in. His pieces highlight the rise of the global culture and the rise of the New World Order. The author is adept in noticing the global trends, not only in culture, and how they are exchanged, but also in people, how they travel.

*Video Night in Kathmandu* And *Other Reports from the Not-So-Far East* (1988), his first travelogue, is a data-rich book of travel reportage. It is a thought-provoking and enthralling travel piece which covers the author’s journeys to the places such as Bali, Tibet, Nepal, China, The Philippines, Burma, Hong Kong, India, Thailand and Japan in Asia in 1980s. The book highlights the West’s meeting with the East and the cultural-cross-pollination due to the increasing exchanges between the two sides. A swirl of locations, time zones and cultures in the travelogue marks Iyer’s insightful impressions on today’s New World, and all its new developments. The author explores the Asian countries to examine how some of the East’s deep-rooted, diverse, complicated and traditional cultures respond to the fast-spreading and fast-invading Western culture. The writer notes down the transactions between the East and the West and throws deep-insight in to the brand - new hybrid cultures of the West and the East. He takes delight in the astonishing developments in the “Westernised Asia.” The author found that every Asian culture he visited had just opened up to the Western world. Every country had taken something from the West. The author was delighted to see the Easterner’s adoption of Western styles, fashions and lifeways. He found the Asians, adoptable to new trends and changes. The author has discovered the
Americanised Asia during his travel. Also, he surprises the readers with many a detail about the Asiatic countries. He writes that East too had influenced the West. The East has conquered the West through its culinary skills, technology and culture. The author points out that “the mysterious East is all around us when we step out of our front doors in Sydney, Toronto, London” (VNIK 377). The writer remarks that the world is heavily interconnected; no culture or country in the changing times can live in seclusion. According to him, hybridity, mix and mingling are the order of the day in the post-modern world.

*Falling Off the Map: Some Lonely Places of the World* (1993) offers some nice glimpses of world’s isolated places such as North Korea, Argentina, Cuba, Iceland, Bhutan, Vietnam, Paraguay and Australia. The author takes a grand tour of these deserted places which are cut off from the rest of the world. He depicts those places which are isolated in spirit and time. But these ‘Lonely Places’ are peculiar fascination to the author because they are “offering peace beyond measures and the perfect place in which to think about loneliness and space” (*FOTM* ix). He experiments his philosophy of living a lonely and a peaceful life in distant and inconvenient places of the world. In an interview with Patrick Bethanne Kelly, the author remarks, “.... the journey into mystery, or the journey inward, is what’s fascinated me all along. *Falling Off the Map* was about how locations took me to places in myself, about questions I was wrestling out. The only real movement is the inward one, I think, what we cherish from journeys is that inward shift that takes place in us”(3). He says that Lonely Places’ celebrate
their identity upon their loneliness. “Some are born to isolation some have isolation thrust upon them,” he writes (FOTM5). “Iceland is the one that’s not really part of Europe. Australia … hardly seems to notice, or to care, that it is a Lonely Place; Bhutan bases its identity upon its loneliness, and its refusal to be assimilated into India, or Tibet, or Nepal. Paraguay simply slams the door and puts up a Do Not Disturb sign …. Both South Korea and North Korea are zany, lonely places in their way. North Korea is so cut off from the world that it … can’t imagine anything except North Korea” (FOTM 4-5). The countries seemed to enjoy their loneliness.

“Lonely Places,” the writer views, “are not just isolated places, for loneliness is a state of mind” (FOTM 6). These countries seemed to celebrate their loneliness. Iyer in his fascinating tour of world’s remote, exotic, and dismal places, finds many changes there. “Vietnam,” he writes, “at present, is a pretty girl with her face pressed up against the window of the dance hall, waiting to be invited in: Argentina longs to be part of the world it left …. ” (FOTM 5). “We are too much taken with British ways,” said an Argentine friend to the author (FOTM 33). “Iceland is also more and more full of foreign faces and less militantly blond than even four years ago. There is a Thai restaurant now in Reykjavik, and a Thai snack bar …. There are Somalian refugees, adopted kids from Sri Lanka, even immigrants from North Korea” (FOTM 75). The author points out:

Scarcely a century ago, only 5 percent of Icelanders lived in towns; today, the figure is more than 80 percent …. Today, however, 1,45,000 of the country’s
255 people live in and around the suburb - sprouting capital .... Iceland boasts more VCRs per household than any other country .... Even young couples, when not talking of their holidays in Spain and their dreams of seeing the Pyramids will tell you that purity is to be found in the countryside ...” (FOTM 74-75)

He further writes that in Vietnam, “In the countryside, the changes are even more pronounced. Brand – new brick houses are popping up in every village, TVs are lighting up the dark, scooters are closing in on water buffalo. Every other child seems to be weaving a baseball cap that announces, enigmatically, THE RATS WON . . .” (FOTM 124). The writer highlights the development in the country.

The author notes down that “.... North Korea was teeming with .... U.N. men and development aides, acronyed bigwigs and troubleshooters. Now they were seated in the dinning room. German and Chilean and African, many in their most formal gear” (FOTM 15). In Bhutan, he writes, “I could sense the first stirrings of a modernizing impulse. The new jet was one sign of this, and there was already a talk of an airport terminal that would hold 160 people .... ” (FOTM 110) Sightseers rushed to Cuba. To the visitors, “.... Havana nights are the most vibrant and electric, with dark-eyed, scarlet girls leaning against the fins of chromepolished’ 57 Chryslers under the floodlit mango trees of Prohibition-era nightclubs. . . .” (FOTM 56). Paraguay boasted with “Korean-run Japanese restaurant”(FOTM 160) “ block-long houses,” “boomtown malls”( FOTM 148) “skyscrapers”, “high-rises” (FOTM 164) and supermarkets that offered “Japanese Super Gummi candies, Chinese Perfect cube boxes, Jordache jeans,
and Taps of Fips Asmussen” (FOTM 168). In Australia, the writer gathered, “70 percent of Aussies live in eight major cities” (FOTM175). There were “pastel perfect new hotels” (FOTM176), “crocodile corner, and stores selling ... croc bags, croc water pistols, huge inflatable crocs, and croc T-shirts ... Not long ago, the Four Seasons Hotel chain opened up nearby, the world’s first hotel shaped entirely like a crocodile, a 750-foot, 11 million monstrosity with evil yellow eyes and a huge gray spine ...” (FOTM 183). While talking of the Australians, Iyer observes “that they can make themselves at home anywhere,” (FOTM 185).

The author could see change everywhere in Australia. The writer’s finding is that the people of the Lonely Places could make, themselves at home in their most inconvenient zones. The writer claims that there will be no shortage for Lonely Places and lonely people as the world shrinks everyday with global business contacts, global technology and cross-communications. The author insightfully remarks that “... the world contracts and isolation fades, half the countries around the globe are still off the map in some sense, out of sight, out of mind, out of time” (FOTM 10). According to the author, there will be no country in the future. As he says in an interview, there will be no Japan in the future. But the Japanese can be found everywhere. This applies to all modern states. Countries are dissolving in the wake of globalization.

Tropical Classical: Essays From Several Directions is an excellent collection of essays about places such as Ethiopia, Nepal, Tibet, Bombay and New York, and the people like Norman Lewis, Tenzin Gyatso and Peter Matthiessen. It also includes
reviews of books by more than twenty writers. It focuses on a literary phenomenon of some importance. The book marks the beginning of a new literary voice which he calls, “Tropical Classical.” He concentrates on three of its masters like Derek Walcott [in poetry], Michael Ondaatje [in fiction] and Richard Rodriguez [in essay form]. The essays throw light on the masala fusions of our New World.

The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home is about globalism and the future of new global culture. It comprises seven chapters; each chapter focuses on a different locale. “The Burning House” analyses thoroughly the instability of life in California. The chapter begins with a personal note. He mentions about a fire accident that burnt down his home in California to ashes. He starts his life anew. But he is preoccupied with the feeling that the flames ate up all his past and foundation. Hence, he laments, “all the props of my parents’ sixty years, all the notes and prospects I’d been collecting for fifteen years, all the photographs, memories all the past gone” (TGS 5). From here onwards his ‘homeless’ nature casts a sway on him. He refers to himself as a “homeless person” (TGS 5). This spark of homelessness grew into a flame when the people around him acknowledged him as homeless and addressed him so.

After experiencing an earthquake in California, he moved to Japan and lived there for some time. He returned to California after an earthquake in his adopted home, in Western Japan. The author gives instances from his personal life in order to indicate the uncertainties and displacement in the life of the people that come in the
form of fire, flood and travel. This chapter highlights the fact that many such sudden movements have been witnessed by people in the new century for various reasons. Such movements have resulted in massive transformations around people. The New World is swollen with multi-raced nationalities. For more and more people, the world is coming to resemble a refugee camp or a Dispora filled with new people from the corners of the world. Hence, everybody turns as a “postmodern neighbor,” to use the writer’s words (TGS 6). Naturally, everyone becomes a non-belonger without a permanent home to dwell. Because of this man has to live with a sense of detachment, disconnection, uprootedness and displacement. To justify the title of his first chapter, Iyer finishes with a special note that “much of the world’s a burning house” (TGS 38). Thus, homelessness is the ultimate reality now.

The second chapter titled “The Airport” describes the increased mobility,comings and goings these days. It gives an interesting account of some of the world’s transnational airports such as Hethrow, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Kennedy Airport, Chicago’s O’Hare, Calcutta’s Dum Dum and Berlin’s Templeholf, where travellers and transnationals assemble. To him, an airport becomes a meeting place and a collection point where different cultures meet, mix and mingle. All of a sudden it appears, as if the writer tells, all places are in one place at the flying grounds. The writer makes a comparison between cities and airports. He says that modern cities, are like modern airports and modern airports look like modern cities. The International terminals, like the cities have been equipped with state-of-the-art technology. It boasts
with super stores and splendid malls which are run by immigrants from various other
countries. One can buy anything from the airport. Like the cities there are recreation
clubs and entertainment centres now in airports. Like the population in the cities the
passengers who arrive in the airports are mostly foreign-born hybrids and mongrels.
Their identities are mixed up, hyphenated and merged. The author noticed the cross-
cultural communications and exchanges among the new arrivals. Airport is the only
place where all the “disheveled immigrants” merge together (TGS 62). According to the author, this “no-man’s land (TGS 59) becomes a home for homeles persons who cross borders and arrive there to prepare them for a new life. The author claims that airports are models of our future.

The third chapter “The Global Marketplace” is epitomized in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a very rare city of expatriates. It is thickly populated by immigrants and exiles. The city has been completely built up by the immigrant society there. It has become a potential global market for overseas investors. Hong-Kong represents a job market where anybody can get better jobs which is something unimaginable at one’s home. Hong Kong’s growth surprised Iyer. Its glittering shopping malls, splendid high-rises, sparkling conference centres and crowded markets impressed him. There were hotels with 565 rooms, 604 rooms and 512 rooms where room service was extended to customers. There was a four story shopping mall known as Admiralty which has got an airport on the ground floor. There were four theatres and twenty eating places. The author interacted with his friend Richard and his wife Sharon. Richard
conducts his business in the “mid air.” He was flying to many countries in a single day. He has homes everywhere as he lives in the aeroplanes. The Philippines, the Indians, and the Chinese who live in Hong Kong are stateless people there. The writer calls Hong Kong a kind of “floating International Settlement” (TGS 107). Like Hong Kong, cities are populated by people from different backgrounds who arrive to start new lives. They are “inwardly rooted” to live with any change (TGS 112). Hong Kong has accommodated such uprooted transnationals and cosmopolitans to make Hong Kong one of their homes.

In the fourth chapter, the author considers Toronto in Canada the best example of “The Multiculture” because it is “the most multicultural city in the world by UN calculations (TGS 124). He finds diversity in Toronto. It is a magnet for refugees. It boasted a mixed population of Indians, Sri Lankans, Haitians, Rwandans, Somalis, Chinese, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Portuguese, Abyssinians and many other nationalities. The place was densely populated by American refugees. The author interestingly points out that the city adjusted with the immigrants. Cosmopolitanism had made the place more dynamic, vibrant, flexible and more tolerant. The author noticed that a new cross-cultural order had set in in Toronto due to the multinationals present there. Toronto resembled a refugee camp, the author points out. The immigrants who live in Canada felt at home. The Government has enacted multicultural policies to protect the interests of the new settlers. The multi-ethnic Canada was emerging as the “new World City” (TGS 134).
The fifth chapter is on the Olympic Games which was hosted by Atlanta. The author explores Atlanta’s Olympic Village, “a utopian global campus” (TGS 177). To him, it seemed to interpret global unity, global harmony and universalism. It resembled a parallel universe. Upon arriving at Atlanta the author saw that all the worlds were there. Its restaurants from 271 nations, fifty-thousand volunteers and visitors from around the globe delighted him. The author thought that the Olympics was a festival celebrated by all nations. Differences, distinctions and colours faded there. The sports people, the crowd and the locals cohabited. The author claims that the Olympic Games expresses the “interconnectedness of global human family” (TGS 227) and universal brotherhood.

The chapter titled “The Empire” ponders the culture today in England. England, he says, has transformed much. Unlike the England of his youth, it has become more flexible. Imperialism ended with Immigration and cultural exchange. The writer remarks that it is now the colonial people who rule their master. Many foreign influences has entered the soil and the country has embraced them without resistance. It is a mixed society now. It boasts with minority communities, refugees and coloured people from elsewhere. Multinationals are steadily swarming in with their hotels and restaurants. With the presence of new communities in the country, the writer highlights, the Empire has become more tolerant. It tuned itself to accept the order of the day.

The last chapter of the book entitled “The Alien Home” takes the readers to the author’s “alien home,” Japan. His journey ends in Kyoto where the author lives
like an outsider person. He doesn’t claim that Japan is his home. He discovers a kind of belonging there because he makes homes everywhere. He himself says, “Japan will never be entirely my home” (TGS 273). He claims citizenship amidst the alien surroundings in Japan, where everybody calls him a foreigner or an outsider. He gets along there because “home is the place where, when you have to go there they don’t have to take you in” (TGS 278). Though he is living there with his “longtime love” - Hiroko, the author speaks less Japanese and her partner speaks less English. Hence, the writer tells that everything is strange and foreign to him and this foreignness is home to him.

In the book, the author uses the venues such as airports, Hong Kong, Canada, Atlanta, England and Japan as multicultural sites where the transnationals arrive from faraway places to adopt these zones as their temporary homes. The author catches through his conversations and interactions the growing sense of multinationalism, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism among people due to the constant rise of refugees, exiles, stateless and homeless persons worldwide. The old definitions of home, nation and nationality become obsolete with the rise of “stateless souls” (TGS 99). Hence, the postmodern has to construct new and flexible identities to get along in this brand-new world.

*Abandon: A Romance* is a fascinating novel. It is a romance set in Iran, a place the author has not visited so far. In the novel, an English research scholar from California namely John Macmillan, is preparing his dissertation on Rumi, a thirteenth-
century Islamic poet from Afghanistan. He pursues the ancient manuscripts of Sufi mysticism to complete his study. He travels to Damascus to unearth a secret manuscript that contains the lost poems by Rumi. He travels through Syria, Iran, Spain and India. He learns that the secret manuscript might have been smuggled and travelled to the West during the Iranian Revolution after the down fall of the then Iranian President Shah to protect them from destruction by Ayatolla Khomeini’s people. Macmillan’s search ends with meeting a mysterious, flighty and seemingly fragile Danish – Iranian called Camilla Jensen, who is presently based in California. As the hero tries to find out the meaning of Rumi’s poems, he also begins to unravel Carmilla’s secrets and falls in love with her. Camilla Jensen is a traumatized girl who is in search of her roots. The hero abandones his research and takes Camilla to Iran to track down her roots. Their intimacy grows but both are so fearful of abandonment that their love might stop. As a religious studies major, John is committed to pursuing transcendent values. But, Camilla Jensen is troubled, unorganized, impromptu, apologetic, needy and unpredictable. Their relationship develops with twists and turns. She claims to be an actress but she never gets a role. He sees her as secretive and mysterious.

Macmillan is hopeful that he can offer her with what she needs: history, tradition, and a role. He expects that she must believe him that he has the capacity to bring happiness in her face. But she reveals her worst aspects and erratic behaviour. His doubt deepens. As the affair begins to get oppressive, she hands him a Persian
manuscript which Macmillan thinks to be the genuine article. While he is obsessed with the manuscript, Camilla disappears.

Abandonment is the main theme of this passionate novel. The author has explored it through Macmillan and Camilla. The word ‘abandon’ imply many shades of meaning. The lovers seek out abandoned, deserted, unfamiliar, or uninhabited places such as abandoned houses, mosques and the desert. They both are comfortable there even though they abandon them each time. Camilla is always fond of making love in abandoned houses and then vanishes. The hero, like Rumi, abandons himself to attain spiritual ecstasy. He transcends this world, as Sufi mystics long for the world hereafter to dissolving into the Creator. Once again, the remarkable novel is about self-denial, the abandonment of hope and desire and a fascinating exploration into the self.

*Sun After Dark: Flights in to the Foreign* is a superb collection of seventeen short travel essays on Bali, Tibet, India, Oman, Ethiopia, Bolivia, the Philippines, Cambodia and Easter Island. The pieces include a few portraits of the people like the singer Leonard Cohen and the fourteenth Dalai Lama, and the penetrating reviews of books by W.G. Sebald and Kazuo Ishiguro. As the author often says, he comes back after this trip strange even to himself. Other than his voyages to Bali, Oman and Easter Island, other journeys are more spiritual than physical. In the book he brings out metaphors of postmodern dislocation and homelessness. The author is fascinated by the concept of exile when he presents the portraits of the two high-profile exiles namely Leonard Cohen [now living with Buddhist monks in California, and Tibet’s
spiritual leader Dalai Lama]. In all the places the writer hunts his own place in displacement and is at home in these locations. The titles of all the works of Pico Iyer may vary. But his theme does not at all change. His writings highlight the postmodern displacement, dislocation, rootlessness and homelessness. The characters and the situations he expertly creates embody his vision and ideas. Pico Iyer’s ideas and views occupy a significant place in his writings and the solutions he offers can be viewed as a remedy for many of the problems and difficulties today.

The present study, “Travel, Transition and Transnationality in Pico Iyer’s Writings” attempts to analyse the effect of travel in the lives of men. It examines what the word ‘home’ ‘nation’ ‘nationality’ and ‘self’ can possibly mean in a world which is in a state of constant flux at this moment. The thesis is organized into five chapters as, Introduction, Travel, Transition, Transnationality and Summation.

The introductory chapter traces the origin and the growth of travel writing and consolidates the travelogues written by the predecessors of Pico Iyer from the second century till the present day. The second chapter titled Travel focuses on Pico Iyer’s itineraries in Asian countries such as Bali, Tibet, Nepal, China, The Philippines, Burma, Hong Kong, India, Thailand and Japan. It presents a unique portrait of each place, its history and the people. The third chapter is titled as Transition. It analyses how Asia is in transition today due to travel, technology and globalization. Also, it studies how people adopt and adapt to the new trends and influences. The fourth chapter, Transnationality, discusses the concept of ‘home’ ‘nation’ ‘nationality’ and ‘self’ owing
to global changes. It highlights and catches the emerging sense of ‘transnationalism’ and ‘transnationality’ among individuals. *Summation*, the final chapter, gathers together a view of what has been discussed in the core chapters and corroborates each strand with the other. In the light of these major themes, the researcher confirms the hypothesis that in the modern world of constant flux with the heavy influx of several thousands of refugees, migrants, exiles, expatriates, tourists and transnationals everywhere, the postmodern man has to refer to himself as the citizen of the world only. A situation has arisen to live with no fixed sense of home, nation, nationality and identity. Man has to forge mixed, merged and hyphenated identities in the fast changing world.