Modern man is living in a new world. The globe is accelerated by travel and technology. It is the largest industry in the world now. The modern world is enriched by Information Technology, computers and globalization. The latest technologies have made the world shrunk heavily. No place is a faraway region in the present context. World’s remotest places are so near nowadays with the introduction of Internet, e-mail and World Wide Web.

With the rapid growth of transportation, the mobility among individuals and groups has incredibly increased. A largest migration in history has happened in the late 90s. The present century may rightly be called “the century of movement” (TGS 10). Mass migration in the name of travel, tourism, flood and war is happening around the globe. According to a travel blog, a million people are crossing borders every day. Iyer writes, “more and more of us are moving between countries as easily as between channels on our screens …” (TGS 26).

The increased movements worldwide nowadays has become a part of every day life. Border crossing is the fashion of the day. There has been a significant increase in migration in recent years. Over 190 million people live outside the country in which they were born. As Sura P.Rath observes, “Anglo – Indians in India, Amerasians in
Vietnam and South Korea, Eurasians in several colonised parts of the world, mulattos and children of miscegenation in the United States, and such others are visible cases in point” (9). America and Canada have more immigrants than any other countries in the world. But immigrant population in many other nations is on the rise. Many countries have swollen with the immigrant communities and multinationals. Every place today is crowded with people from every other place. V.S.Naipaul aptly discerns that “we were in a new world, our population was greatly mixed, English people were few and kept themselves to themselves, and England was as a result only one of the countries of which we were aware” (188).

The effects of travel, tourism, technology and globalization have been heavily felt by the modern men in their lives. Modern nation - states have undergone a tremendous change owing to emigration. With a thick presence of multinationals, “the world is coming to resemble a diaspora, filled with new kinds of beings – Gastarbeiters and boat people and marielitos – as well as new kinds of realities: Rwandans in Auckland and Moroccans in Iceland,” Iyer writes (TGS11). Diaspora has become a feature of the New World and hence the world is increasingly becoming a multinational globe. The universe is in complete transition today. The growth of Tourism Industry has brought in many transformations in every country. With the increasing contacts and cross – cultural communications among individuals, cultural changes and exchanges have been happening. The changes are both external and internal. Multinationals throng foreign streets. Old buildings are demolished and are replaced
with fashionable, state-of-the-art new blocks, high-rise buildings and skyscrapers. Local culture and lifeways have changed with the impact of Western culture and fashions. Ultra–modern shopping malls, shopping arcades, shopping centres, restaurants, hotels, bars, food–joints, McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken Parlours have mushroomed in the neighbourhood. Modern societies and modern nation-states look alike everywhere with these latest developments. People assimilate all these changes easily and accustom to the new trends.

Everything is available to everyone in the “newly made world”. Iyer is interested to tell that the world is international now and has become more generic. According to him, the whole world has gone global today. As Thorsten Botz–Bornstein views, “global culture has become graspable with your hands” (52). Owing to this trend, every traveller is benefited by his travel. It changes a traveller in many ways. It makes a person more flexible in his routine and lifestyle. It opens new possibilities for him regarding both the world and his own self.

This chapter is titled as “Transition” that does not relate ‘change’ in the literary sense. Here change is situational and external. Transition is a psychological process that man undergoes to come into terms with a new situation. Transition has become a key concept and its inevitability is recognised now. The desire for change is universal; and all societies – big or small, modern or primitive, Western or non-Western – share this mode. The chapter reflects the author’s mental itineraries and studies the
effects of travel and tourism on humanity. It analyses how the new generation adopts a foreign culture or an invading dominant culture, and adapts to the foreign influences.

When Pico Iyer made his first Asia trip in the mid 1980s, he observed closely the Continent’s transition from “isolation to connectedness,” to borrow the author’s phrase (VNIK 375). Asia had just opened it to the outside world then. As Sura P.Rath eloquently puts, “the walls between cultures, made of bamboo or brick, soft clay or stone, are always porus” (13). The Asian countries had begun to admit more travellers and tourists. Asia overflowed with visitors. Bali, a tiny island in Indonesia, was swarmed with Australians, Britishers, South Koreans and the Philippines. Lhasa, Tibet’s capital, felt a stream of sightseers from Munich, London, Holland, Cambodia, Danish, France, Canada, India, Hong Kong, Chengdu, German, Dutch, Italy and New Zealand. Travellers streamed into China. A flock of foreigners reached Bangkok. Crowds of tourist from Britian, America, K.L., Bangkok, Manila, Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, Australia and India came to Hong Kong. The countries like Nepal, China, the Philippines, Burma, Thailand and Japan kept their doors open to the Westerners. East - West relations has increased with the thick presence of multinationals, exiles, expatriats, refugees and tourists everywhere. Asia had remade it with the new presences.

Video Night in Kathmandu And Other Reports from the Not – So - Far East (1988) is the first collection of essays on Pico Iyer’s travels in the Asian countries. His book is about the dynamic interaction between culture and tourism. His journey covers Bali, Tibet, Nepal, China, The Philippines, Burma, Hong Kong, India, Thailand
and Japan. The writer showcases his artistic ability through some of the rich images he glimpsed in the enchanting Asia. It is true that Pico Iyer invented the Westernised Asia. In an interview with Michael Mcgirr, he says that the book is “my discovery of the world .... ” (n.pag.) Asia has fascinated travellers of all times. When Naipaul travelled towards India through Cairo and other eastern countries, the East, he writes, “tried to reveal itself; each recognition was a discovery” (*An Area of Darkness*11). Brunton writes that “it is good to go as a touring sightseer to those exotic Oriental lands ... We shall return home enriched and enheartened indeed” (3). The East attracts travellers and is overflowing with seekers from around the globe. The writer brings to life the places he invented. He throws deep insight into the “brand– new hybrid cultures” in the Continent. The new community seemed to belie Rudyard Kipling’s famous couplet. East and West meet and exchange a lot in Iyer’s fictional world. It is the reality today. The author witnesses the “silent courtship between two conflicted cultures”, to use Sura P.Rath’s phrase (9).

The author pictures the constantly increasing meetings of East and West and the increasingly frequent interchange between them. This meeting, he believes, would strengthen the understanding and reduce the conflict and tension between the two sides. As Bhikhu Parekh observes, “genuine global universalism can be achieved at only by means of and uncoerced and equal intercultural ... dialogue” (74). He is of the view that every culture will benefit from the insights of others. What the readers know not the author informs them enthusiastically and ecstatically. Iyer’s journeys are not
just journeys to places. He explores the locales he visits. When Patrick Bethanne Kelly interviewed the author, he said, “every book is a new adventure, a journey into a different place, and my hope is that each book remains as much outside my grasp as India and Japan and Morocco do” (22). He travels with a mission in his mind and brings out something strange and new out of his fresh insights. The author is not interested in describing a nation’s physical features but he analyses thoroughly how it has changed in a time of an ever shrinking world and how a place influences and acts on an individual. Hence, every place he attempts to explore becomes a ‘metaphor’ and he travels with a focussed theme. He replies to Michael Mcgirr in an interview that “when I travel I try to use each place as a metaphor and as a gateway to something much larger” (n.pag.). For example, as he says, he uses Tibet as a model of exile and tries to create a whole new virtual community. Thus, he has a theme to discuss everywhere he goes.

The author starts his expedition from Bali, a small island in Indonesia. He felt that the island was in transition. His observant eye very perceptively caught sight of the changes there as though with a sensitive lens. The unexpected transformations in the place was noticed by him the minutes he landed there. Its Hey Shop, the Hello Shop, Easy Rider Travel Service, T.G.I Friday Restaurants, Mexican Cafés, Ragge music and discos confirmed the strong Western presence in Bali. The author takes the measure of all its cafés, restaurants and hotels and sees them as agents of culinary and cultural change. Also, they tell upon the contemporary food consumption with the introduction
of McDonald’s and KFC Parlours. Garden restaurants served “tropical drinks” and “magic mushrooms” (VNIK 35). Bars offered “Aussie-style steaks” and “Special Aussie H’Burger”. One sign announced “Susis’ Aussie Breakfast” and another Waltzing Maltilda Sarongs” (VNIK35). The drinks in the pubs were named, “Bali Kiss”, “Love Portion” and “Dirty Mother”(VNIK 35). “A holiday,” the author quotes from an Australian brochure, “allows the freedom to sample the various styles of cuisine and freedom developed in response to the demands of international tourism” (VNIK 38). Lovina alone offered 400 varieties of food items. Everyday life today is a hybrid of the local and the global. As Pramod K.Nayar writes, “Finding Chettinad Chicken toppings on your Pizza Hut Pizza would be a good example. McDonald’s use local tastes to modify its menu: more noodles in Japan and more fish in Scandinavian nations. In other areas too the global finds a local expression ...” (34). Indian food is available in any city in the world now. Britain declared Indian food to be Britain’s ‘national cuisine’. The hybrid dishes and food items create a global food system that is neither purely Western or Eastern in tastes. The Indian dishes in the West symbolize not only the confluence of culinary skills but also the exchange of cultures.

The writer snapshots the rapid transformation in the place due to tourism. Also, he presents the adaptation of the ways of life of the Western world as a result of the penetration of the Western culture. He captures the fashion-conscious youths in Bali. The Balinese walked past in tiny skirts. He thought that the young girls lost their innocence because they freely approached the tourists and asked them where they
were from. They have made the island into “a land of song and dance” (VNIK 31). Balinese culture, particularly, Balinese dance attracted tourist audiences. The vibrancy of the place was visible to the writer. Discos, night clubs and twenty – four hour coffee houses were there. He writes, “Bali was full of noises, sounds and sweet airs ... a thousand twangling instruments” (VNIK 32). Bali had changed much. Iyer took notice of the boys who moved fast on their motorbikes in T-shirts and jeans. T-shirts in Kuta said, “Bullshit I had a ball in Bali” and “Proudly Australian” (VNIK 54). Boys with headbands around their curls were sighted by him. He noticed the lifestyle of the youths. A heavy flow of tourists made all the changes in these islands. “Cultural Studies sees identities in metropolises as increasingly linked to consumption and lifestyles” (Nayar 34). He gives a good example. “The Tommy Hilfiger T-shirt and Levi’s jeans are combined with an Indian dupatta or a pair of Kolhapuri slippers to create a hybrid fashion system that is neither purely Western capitalist product nor Indian” (34). Places today display all the world’s leading consumer brands or lifestyle brands due to globalisation.

Tourists explored Bali’s tourist sites such as Kuta Beach, the Sanur Beach and the Ubud. These quite villages had transformed into prime tourist spots. Australians flocked together for fun and fantasy. “Bali, in fact, had become for Australians what Greece is for many Europeans, the Bahamas for New Yorkers and Hawai for those in the far East – the most convenient paradise island on their door – step,” Iyer writes (VNIK 34-35). Hordes of tourists flocked to Bali for sightseeing and enjoyment. The
beaches were alive with discos, dances, eating and drinking competitions. A network of luxury hotels set along the seashore in Sanur Beach was attraction to the tourists. The beaches were jam-packed with foreigners from Germans, Australians, Jamaicans, New Yorkers, Santa Cruz and the locals. Foreigners crowded there in search of the local culture. Iyer writes that “Guests need not leave the grounds in search of native culture. The native culture would come in search of them” (VNIK 39). Beach hotels provided facilities like a ten pin bowling alley, swimming pools, golf courses and stages for dance performances at night. “The paradise island” provided all to its seekers (VNIK 33). Yogesh Atal reflects that: the entire effort of the colonial regimes was to “Westernise” or “modernise” these societies by introducing the institutions and ways of life of the developed countries. The same ethos was carried forward when these societies attained their independence from the colonial rule” (1). Bali looked to the West and adopted the path of development.

Tourism had brought in changes in Bali. “The three tourist havens” – Kuta, Sanur and Ubud – had grown more swollen with visitors and infrastructure (VNIK 41). The Sanur beach boasted with thirty hotels and 4525 guest rooms. All the new additions — modern buildings, air-conditioned bars and high-rises — announced the sudden boom in these islands due to the development of tourism. Michael Picard discusses that the impact of tourism on Balinese culture is “positive” because tourism revived its culture and Bali became “the show window of Indonesia” (VNIK 8).
Tourists overcrowded to fall in love with the place and the “graceful people” there (VNIK 31). Australian girls reported their missing boy friends in the English newspapers. A Balinese girl in a garden restaurant was speaking to a Swiss student. They were found with shirtless tourists. Easterners and Westerners mingled and exchanged their glances and smiles. Sightseers flew to Bali “for good times, cheep beer and pretty girls” (VNIK 44). An Indonesian girl, on Iyer’s first night there, came up to him and said, “I had a dream last night. I found two flowers and put one of them in my hair. That flower was you” (VNIK 36). An English friend of him visited Bali on a short trip and fell in love with a German soon. The locals accosted the visitors for their good times. The cross-cultural communication between Easterners and Westerners transported the writer. Bali looked, to Iyer, like Jamaica or New York. Indonesia is now “home” to more people than South Korea, The Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong and Nepal combined, the author observes.

Iyer was enthralled by a strange mix in the place. In the largest Islamic nation, “the mythology was Hindu and its most famous monument, Borobudur, was Buddhist,” he noted (VMK 58). In Indonesia, the tourist trade flourished and the economy improved because of tourism. The Balinese and the tourists learnt to adapt to the new situation there. The locals’ familiarity with things Western was ecstatic to the author. His explicatory analysis of the cultural impact on the people of Bali and also on the guests reveals the cultural change and captures the past and the present in Bali. As the author observes, the inter – cultural dialogue can be taken as an incentive to creation. In Bali,
as Iyer says, new musical forms, new dances, new forms of life have been generated by the visitors. Tourism in Bali had become a key agent in reconstructing Bali’s “traditional culture”. Michael Picard says that “tourism has neither ‘polluted’ Balinese culture nor kindled its ‘renaissance’, much less simply contributed to ‘preserving’ it” (198). Pramod K. Nayar views that “the local is not necessarily marginalised in the consumerist everyday life : it is emphasised” (35). Iyer views that these transactions and mixings are the form of our future culture.

Tibet, one of Asia’s deepest cultures, was Iyer’s second favourite place. He first visited Tibet in 1985. Next to Cuba, Tibet is the second place he always mentions. In his interview with Shoma Chaudhury, he says:

Without question Tibet is the place that has most exalted and troubled and quickened and saddened me. I travel mostly into places that never really leave me, simply because the questions and riddles do not begin to fade away when one gets on the plane to go home. Tibet, more than other place, took me out of my usual self, and placed me on the roof top of my being. It offered me a draft of cleansing, uplifting light … (29).

Tibet fascinates travellers. Heinrich Harrer (1912-2006) had travelled seven years in Tibet. His excellent book *Seven Years in Tibet* (1952) is about his wanderings in Tibet, one of the greatest centres of Himalayan Buddhism. Paul Brunton (1898-1981), an acclaimed traveller, was enchanted by the silence in Tibet. He writes, “Silence
rules all day like a sovereign ...” (191). Vikram Seth’s *From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983) is a significant travelogue of modern times. Curiosity is the first incentive of Seth’s explorations through Sinkiang and Tibet in this travel narrative. He tells, “I have always wanted to go to Tibet, yet I know that this is largely due to the glamour of surrounding the unknown ...” (From Heaven Lake 33). He writes further that he wanted to reach his home in Delhi “by a more interesting route” (From Heaven Lake 33). The place he mentions is Tibet. His excitement doesn’t seem to disappear from his memory when he says, “even having been to Tibet, it still strikes me as somewhere I would like to travel to, a place I feel I still know next to nothing” (From Heaven Lake 177). Tibet haunts his memory. “TIBET WE ALL agreed was an inspiration to visit,” Iyer comments (VNIK 71).

Iyer’s curiosity increased when the “Forbidden Land” (VNIK 61) unveil its curtains with the Chinese invasion in 1959. The author writes, “Tibet is now on the world’s screen ... And its people get cast around the globe ... ” (TGS 36). Tibet’s Buddhism, ancient tradition and rich culture drew him. He desired to travel into the heart of Tibet to study its rich culture to know his self. Seth views that “to learn about another culture is to enrich one’s life, to understand one’s country better, to feel more at home in the world and indirectly to add that reservoir of individual goodwill that may, generations from now, temper the cynical use of native power (From Heaven Lake 120). Hassan observes that “... greater understanding of one’s neighbours and of oneself that would foster harmony and lead to reducing conflict” (39). Modern writers
envision an ideal future through open dialogue between countries. Upon arriving at Tibet, its landscape arrested his attention. Its snows, clouds, mountains and the sky offered him pleasure. For the felicity of picturesqueness too, the readers feel grateful to Iyer. His entry into Tibet is heralded by picturesquely poetic scene. The country enthralls his senses by a delightful scene. The picturesque ekes out the romance of an aesthetic pilgrimage. But his tone changes and he becomes serious in no time. His incessantly active and inquisitive mind reacts so quickly to the call of the “morning bells; murmured chants …” in the hilltop monasteries (VNIK 65).

Buddhism attracted him. “Tibetan Buddhism was the first religion I had ever seen more impressive in its place than its preaching,” he says (VNIK 170). In Tibet, he turns a Tibetan by visiting the quite monasteries of Lhasa. He travelled alone every morning to one of the faraway mountain lamaseries, and breathed its silences. The “still silences” (VNIK 65) filled his heart and he felt at peace. “The spacious silences”(VNIK 65) meant a lot to him when he watched the dogs in the lamasery. He writes that “Even the shaggy dogs stationed like guardians outside the lamasery gates seemed strangely charmed into quietude. I never once saw any of them beg, bark, or squabble; they simply lay there, in the sunlight, twenty or thirty or more together, healthy and at peace …” (VNIK 65). The serenity that prevails in the lamasery even casts a salutary effect even on the dogs. In this context it is explicit the marvellous effect of silence on human beings a accompanied by chantings.
Nothing seems to escape from his eyes. Even ordinary matters which often happen find their finest expressions in the hands of Pico Iyer. The faith and the spirit of the Tibetans impressed him. He writes that “All across Lhasa, faith burned with a fervour that left me shaking. From daybreak until at night, old men and the women gathered in crowds outside the central Jokhang Monastery, joining their hands above their heads and flinging themselves down to the dust again and again and again in a ritual three-part prostration” (VNIK 70). Iyer shows the Tebetan’s abiding devotion in their culture amidst the “terrible opposition”(VNIK 70).

This spirit ran so deeply in the whole of Tibet. He watched the international pilgrims swarming in to visit Lhasa to perform their rituals in many of the country’s holy places. Iyer joined them and climbed up “rocky mountain slopes” to immerse himself in the chants at the lamaseries. He attended their prayers. He writes, “almost everyone who had ever stumbled into this zone of mysterious magnetism seemed similarly stirred” (VNIK 70). The author felt shaken by all those influences. Tibet as a religious repository attracts foreigners of faith to quench their spiritual thirst. The country is on the mode of transition with the arrival of foreigners.

The Westerners were interested in Tibetan tradition. He watched them sitting around at five, murmuring “Buddhist chants and fingering their rosaries” (VNIK 75). Brunton observes that the “Eastern countries offer a calmer environment for the quest, a fully worked out tradition, a personal training ...” (8). The calmness in the temples offered him a perfect condition to explore the Oriental mysticism. The Tibetans strictly
adhered to their customs, principles and ideals. Pico Iyer’s active mind accounts for many practices of the Tibetans. He wondered when he heard about a sacred rite called the Celestial Burial in which newly dead bodies were kept on “a huge, flat rock” \( (VNIK 75) \) to cut them into small pieces. They were then left on the Promethean stone to be eaten by vultures. The ritual was a sacrament to the Tibetan Buddhists.

The author’s desire to find how Tibet acts on his personality got fulfilled there when he was awakened by the stillness, the charmness, the spirit, the chants and the prayers in the holy city. In Tibet, though he is not a Buddhist, he spent all his time in the perfectly quiet mountaintop lamaseries and felt anew, cleansed and also at peace. He writes, “uplifted by the chants, the smiles, the holy hush, I felt myself to be a clean and empty room, thrown open to the breeze” \( (VNIK 74) \). The same was felt by Brunton, and he says, “We Westerners ought to be humbler than we usually are in confessing that we need to borrow some spiritual bread from the Orient”\(^{(16)}\). No culture today lives in isolation and every culture is connected to every other culture. According to Pramod K. Nayar, every culture is open to all and is no more a culture of a particular region or territory. Every culture is linked and the postmodern man is increasing becoming a part of a global culture. Westerners are now to be found in the temples of Kyoto and the monasteries of Tibet. “Mass travel has made the whole world available to us in many ways they haven’t been,” Pico Iyer replies to Scott London in an interview \( (n.pag.) \). The West looks to the East for its spiritual needs. The religion forms an important focus of his observation. In Tibet, Buddhism enlightened him and he points
out the fact how Buddhists loved peace and silence. Pico Iyer was overjoyed to see the Tibetans who turned their “exiled land” (VNIK 72) into their home. He writes, “The Tibetans were incorrigibly merry, with quick animation in their faces, ready at any moment to break into ruddy smiles that felt like benedictions” (VNIK 69). Their adaptability amidst their miseries took him by astonishment.

The author records Tibet’s transformation. “The Forbidden Land” (VNIK 61) had parted its lips slightly to welcome “the cool invaders,” the author quotes Satre’s phrase (VNIK 62). Tibet was so long isolated from the influence of modern times. It resisted to prepare for an exchange with the outside world. It was stubborn to renounce its seclusion. As Dalai Lama says, the Tibetans inherited isolation from their ancestors. But captivated by China in 1959, modernizing changes were enforced in Tibet. The writes touches upon the most drastic experiences and the worst sufferings of the unfortunate Tibetans. The strange faces Iyer saw there were “the fierce eyed Khampa bandits,” “leather – skinned Golok Women in green bowler hats,” “rough men from the mountains in hats”, “huge-eyed hairless babies,” traders, mendicants, the foreign pilgrims, the shirtless, beared men and their women in jeans. “SUCH WERE THE colourful souls that made up my world in Lhasa,” he writes (VNIK 65). He could notice the area’s awakening “from stillness and solitude” (VNIK62). Foreigners crowded in the tiny alleyways. Tourists under the Sun, local boys in jeans, women in body-hugging modern dresses informed “the perfect alien setting” in Tibet (VNIK66). “Places and people have become increasingly mobile, multicultural and hybridized” (Nayar 34). According to Nayar, lifestyle is a matter of individual choice
and so it becomes a key component of one’s agency to find one’s identity through lifestyle choices. The author shows how the nation has culturally linked to the outside “modern” world, and been prone to further transformation.

Iyer saw travellers from Munich, Holland and German. A Cambodian refugee and an American lady shared their pleasant times. He interacted with a Chinese girl from Beijing who had been there learning Tibetan painting. A British sailor, a historian from Cambridge, a Danish girl, a Yugoslav girl and a social worker from Singapore were met by the writer. He chatted with an old lady from Pontiac who had been to fifty countries. There were people from China, France, Canada, Hong Kong and Chengdu. He was startled by a Dutan and a Danish student’s fluency in English. Lhasa was made up of such multi-coloured people. Foreigners and the Tibetans met on the “open road” in Lhasa (VNIK 63). “Lhasa was now being colonized by a free-floating band of Whitmanic democrats,” the writer remarks (VNIK 63). As Appadurai claims, we have ‘ethnoscapes’ instead of ‘local cities’ which is a principal component of the new global order. The international community in Tibet excited the author and he was delighted to see the foreign developments. According to the author, in 1984, China had allowed 1,500 foreigners into Tibet. In 1988, the country was visited by 1,00,000 people. Tibet is overrun today with pilgrims, nomads and travellers. When Iyer revisited the country after seventeen years, he writes, many people had visited Tibet and it was a well-known country. The author cherishes the memories of the time he spent together with many of the kindest people there.
Nepal was paradise to Iyer. “WITHIN MINUTES of landing in Kathmandu, I found myself in Eden,” the author astonishes (VNIK 77). He assures the visitation of the West upon the East when his eyes scanned the T-shirt slogans and the strange signs everywhere in Nepal. There were video clubs and video arcades. Discos, dances, the commotion in the streets, jukebox tunes and the crowded city surprised him. He was excited by the strange menus in hotels, food-joints, burger-joints and restaurants. Vendors, shopkeepers, flutesellers, hipsters, “hawkers”, “hustlers” and multinational tourists occupied the place (VNIK 79). Seeing the travellers in Kathmandu, Seth tells, “I marvel at those travellers, who out of curiosity or sense of mission, wander through unfamiliar environments for years on end …” (“Kathmandu; Delhi” 338). Nepal had transformed much with the foreign presences.

Vikram Seth with his visual actuality creates a morbidly picturesque scene of the lives and the busiest streets in Kathmandu. He writes:

Kathmandu is vivid, mercenary, religious with small shrines to flower - adorned deities along the narrowest and busiest streets; with fruitsellers, flutesellers, hawkers of postcards and pornography; shops selling Western cosmetics, film rolls and chocolate; or copper utensils … film songs blare out from the radios, car horns sound, bicycle bells ring …. (“Kathmandu; Delhi” 338)

The street bazaar in Kathmandu was a kaleidoscope of colours, smells and sounds. Pico Iyer photographs the same vibrant Kathmandu. He doesn’t describe the spectacles, monuments, wonders and adventures much. He examines the cultural
takeover of the East by the West and the interaction between the Easterners and the Westerners. He presents a kaleidoscope of characters to show that everybody in a country today is from every other country. Iyer’s journey, as Laurel Fais remarks, “is interacational ... he keeps his keen eye out for the “matting dance” between individual and individual, as well as between culture and individual” (129). He ventured into Nepal to discover which stuff of the West got through in Nepal. He records how the tourist community responded to the native culture. He draws his impressions through the tourists and the locals he met there. The interaction of the cultures of the West with that of the East is manifestly discernible in Nepal.

His chapter on Nepel depicts the established dance of the native and the tourist. The samples given by the author are not only interesting and entertaining but also informative and illuminating. He highlights the postmodern world and the alien presences there. Nepal quickened its pace to the fast changing world. Nepal marched forward so fast to accommodate everybody and anything. The Ministry of Tourism promised, “travel to the magical land where deities mingle with the common people and legends merge with Hindu and Bhuddist spiritualism” (VNIK 84). Everything was available in Nepal. “There is a place halfway between here and heaven,” the author quotes the ads for Royal Nepal Airlines, “where Legends are Real,” (VNIK 84). The courses and classes the hoardings advertised were for thanka painting course, Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Classes and sessions at the Himalayan Yogi Institute. An advertisement under a bookshop said, “Sri Swami Prem Paramahansa will be sharing
his wisdom” (VNIK 83). But, the magazine advertisement for the Jhwalakhel Distillery said, “When you are in Nepal, the land of the spirited people, keep your spirit high with Ruslan vodka (qtd. in VNIK78). The Eden Hashish House had put out a sign that said “the best Nepali Hashish and Ganja.” “Let us take you Higher. Come visit us any time for all your hashish needs”, another ad said (VNIK 80). Hell and Heaven were so closely set up in Nepal. Another trader shouted that “Brown Sugar, White Sugar, Coke, smack, or dope” (VNIK 80). He learned from Pappy that there were fifty video clubs. The signs the author read reflected what was going on in Nepal.

According to the author, “Religion” and “Drugs” had been the country’s “two cash crops” (VNIK 83). “Religion”, he further adds, “was drug to some and drugs were a religion to others” (VNIK 83). In Tibet, people lived near Hell and Heaven. This striking contrast astonished the author. Both religion and drugs were abused. Most of the travellers flocked to this “templed city” for drugs (TLATM 12). The locals also took drugs. The country suffered its consequences. The author writes that “there were 15,000 heroine addicts in Kathmandu alone” (VNIK 95). The country was left with a drug problem. The author voices against the evils of tourism and “mourns the absence of sensibility” in those who took drugs (VNIK 101). He worries about the drug addicts. His social conscience and concern is an appreciable quality in him. In this context, what Brunton tells is relevant here. He says, “Without understanding its message to man, without reverence for its houses of prayers and meditation, the tourist comes


and leaves empty-handed, though his case bulges with souvenirs” (22). The author leaves a message. He is aware of his moral obligation to tell the people what he knows.

Even though his first impression of the city was “delirious” (VNIK79), the author is rejoiced by the sight of the pilgrims who gathered there in the Tibetan temples. He noted that “the Kathmandu Valley contains more temples per square foot than any other place on earth” (VNIK 88). Pilgrims crowded to attend the Buddhist Festival of Lights in the Schwedagon Pagoda. “The deep-voiced chants” (VNIK 81) held the pilgrims spellbound. He caught glimpse of a Western couple in the temple.

The author too felt a spell on him. He was strongly influenced by the head abbot in a monastery there. Calmness and silence descended on the prayer hall. The smell of butter lamps “transported” him. The author registers his enchantment:

And as the muttered chants went on, I began to lose myself in wistful reverie. The strange smells, the hypnotic repetitions, the flutter of candles transported me. I felt myself carried away to distant lamaseries, whisked off to snowy mountain passes. I almost imagined myself back in Tibet ... Through it all, the chanting continued like a spell (VNIK82).

On another occasion, when he entered the Schwedagon Pagoda, he felt, he writes, “I found myself in a state of holy enchantment” (VNIK 78). The holy sites captivated him and stirred him to explore silence and religion.
The author lost himself to find himself. He could easily assimilate the things around him even though he was not a Nepalese and not a follower of their culture. He felt that his participation offered him revelation. The new locale remade him for better. He experimented this in Nepal when he adapted to the ways of the country. He recalls how a Royal Astrologer and a roadside soothsayer advised him when he extended his palm to know his future. The writer tells, “the longer I remained, the more I settled into its cheery rhythms … (VNIK 99). According to him, travel is a metaphor which tells that our life is a journey from known to unknown. Seeing the two faces of Nepal, the author comes to a conclusion, though really confused, that “Edens and hash houses had never, I imagined, been far apart in Kathmandu” (VNIK 80).

Visitors rushed to Kathmandu because it was paradise to them. It filled both their bodies and hearts with what they wanted. Some tourists flew in from the West to fulfil their spiritual needs. Most of the foreigners landed for enjoyment and fantasy. According to the author, “these days, more people came to Nepal to improve their muscles than to expand their minds; their career path was held in much higher esteem than the spiritual path” (VNIK 101). Nepal was famous for its “cosmopolitan cuisine” (VNIK 96) and “smorgasbord of its menus” (VNIK 87). Restaurants served up “Mexican food,” Italian, American Chop Suey, “Reality Soup”, Moussaka, Curry, Viena Schnitzel, Mexican Takos, Vegetarian Chop Suey, Chow Mein, Tibetan, Italian, Indian, Nepal, Chinese dishes, minestrone soup, Fr.onion, “Noodle”, “Plane Toast”, “Vegetable Plow”, lasage and many others. As the author tells, “Nepal’s charm lay in its availability”
Everything was available there. Iyer saw that the ‘Third World’ is increasingly becoming hybridized. The impact of the West is so ubiquitous there.

A New Zealander told him that “the thing about the Nepalese ... are so keen to adapt to Western tastes, that they make dishes they don’t have a clue how to cook. That’s why everyone gets sick there” (VNIK 96). It was true when he heard that the guest houses in Suraha, a small village there, offered Western dishes. The menus promised “Vegetable Plow” and “Iodine-Soaked Salad, Buff burgers, Buff Streak and Buff Tacos” (VNIK 96-97).

Restaurants over there offered extraordinary apple pies, almond layer pies, orange cakes, fruit cakes and lemon pies. The food items and the varied menus that the hotels and restaurants offered were novelty and revelation to him. That is why he is excited by Kentucky Fried Chicken Parlours and McDonald’s in Asia. According to the author, this borrowing and lending are inevitable and have become part of our life. A traveller, he says, will not complain about anything. He will find that everything around him is the same as it is in California or Kathmandu as the universe has gone a generic space. He highlights how the foreigners adapt to the local tastes and imitate the native ways. How do travel and tourism transform places and persons are so visibly dealt with here.

In Nepal, everything from every other nation was available. When he asked a man in a sweet stall for a Nepalese chocolate, his answer was that “We have Indian
chocolate, English, American, German. You can have Thai chocolate. You can have Chinese marshmallow. But, Nepalese, no. Here only international chocolate” (VNIK 88). When Iyer asked another local what he had in his Kathmandu restaurant, he answered, “Indian, Chinese, Continental, German, American, Mexican... No Nepalese, very difficult” (VNIK 88). The varieties of international chocolates and dishes surprised the writer. Iyer lists out all these dishes and varieties of chocolates in order to show that the Nepalese are accustomed to Western tastes and what extent they are westernised in their culture.

Nepal had become more international and multicultural. Italians, “long-haired” men from West, Kashmiris, Americans, Germans, Chinese, Spanish tourists, New Zealanders, Scottish people, Yawkish waitresses and Irishmen were seen by the author. He watched a pony-tailed Italian in a thick red waistcoat and silken Kashmiri caravant. “Glassy-eyed vendors patrolled” in the Freak Street (VNIK 80). “A crew-cut Western woman shuffled past in yellow - and -burgundy Buddhist raiment and sun glasses, while a man with a full - blown maharishi beard stared over his pot of tea … (VNIK 80). These are some of the images he caught there. He displays the multicultural Nepal through the images he shot there. Transformation in Nepal was very much in evidence. Its little boys wore T-shirts and jeans. Sweaters said “Adidas”. Shoppers crowded in the Freak Street. “Change dollars, Traveller’s checks”, shouted a man (VNIK 80). Jukeboxes played out Western songs. Discos were also there. The author is sensitive to the way cultures interact and cohabit in the streets and on the road. He sees not
only the places and people he visits but also the America he had left, as much through others as through his own eyes. He could see that the Easterners build a dream-like world by following the “developed world” as their reference group and took pride in their cultures. Iyer, thus, takes the readers on a journey of intercultural encounters. The author enables the readers to look at places and peoples with new eyes. Nepal seemed to adopt the Western ways and fashions. “I had come to Kathmandu hoping to find a refuge from the trends of Santa Barbara, Cambridge and Manhattan. But that, I realized was like going to Newcastle if one were allergic to coal,” he concludes (VNIK 102). Nepal mirrored Western life and kept up with the modern times.

In China, as the author points out, the door swung sideways without interruption. The modern China kept a proper balance between the old and the new. When he visited the country, it had taken in as many Western forms and fashions as they required. Shanghai streets witnessed the Chinese wearing American clothes. The Chinese liked to watch CNN. In China, a majority of the people watched the Super Bowl than in the United States of America. The portrait of China offers much to admire and emulate. China’s rise to prominence is given attention by the writer. He explored China to see how the Western influences, predictable and unpredictable, are sweeping the scene. Reflecting on change, Iyer chronicles the fusion culture and shows how human consciousness recognizes it. China remained a closed society by planting insulations on its borders. It had restricted both the entry of foreigners and exit of the natives. The New China had begun to give up its aloofness and opened the longtime shut door to
the outside world. Soon the range of choices for the people has become wider than before. The 100 million China Hotel “promised” to treat its guests “like a merchant prince” (VNIK 107). It gleamed under bright modern lights. The city’s grand hotels, fashionable restaurants and cafés announced that China started to change its ways. Another 100 million building, the Quarters of Esso’s, The Hotel Garden, rows of gift stores, crowds of foreigners, Bohemian girls in baggy trousers, international clubs for the tourists, break dances, discos, costly eating places, high – tech goods, open markets, air-conditioned super markets, the shopping centres in Sheuzhan, English textbooks in the bookshops, superstores, neon lights and electric streets were the new signs which declared the robust growth of China. Studies show that “the movement of consumer goods across the space of the globe is matched by the movement of people across the globe” (Nayar 33). The new signs are symbolic of the arrival of ‘cultural’ artefacts and the adoption of global policies in China.

Iyer had to revisit his sense of China when he landed in the country. It had accommodated Capitalism, individualism, fashion and freedom. Its pace, commotion and dynamism excited the author. He was overwhelmed by what he had seen. Their boys rode scooters. The girls wore T-shirts, used Western cosmetics and Western goods. Foreign residents lived like “diplomats.” It extended its services and facilities to foreigners for getting things done easily. There were special waiting rooms in airports for foreigners, specially reserved seats on buses and special compartment in trains. They were allowed to travel in their own cars and sometimes their own
aeroplanes. The author tells about the freedom enjoyed by the locals and the foreigners in the world’s largest Communist nation.

The writer was more interested to see the images of America in this “closed society” (VNIK 6). He writes that peasants in China then enjoyed the images of swimming pools, shopping malls and other pleasures “inside their living rooms” (VNIK 6). Cokes were easily seen everywhere. Boys were found in T-shirt that said “Milano and Ferrari”. He noticed a huge box that had a sign “Microcomputer” (VNIK109). He saw a man with “Schwarzenegger muscles” over his “string shirt”. “The belt around his waist that said “U.S.A.” (VNIK109). The songs he heard were “Yesterday” and “The Gambler”. (VNIK109). He watched a pony - tailed girl who was playing cards with a man. A change swept over there and it was very visible and positive.

Beijing was a surprise to the author. There were rows of gift – stores and banquet halls. He saw a large number of foreigners. He noticed a person in pajama suits and Chinese slippers. When he picked up the China Daily, the programmes one could watch on television were, “We Are the 8th Army Soldiers,” “Accelerating the Ripening of Cotton,” “Around the World ; Beautiful Bulgaria” and “Les Mirables”. On the radio, he could listen to “Australian Songs,” “Spring Is the Season for Sheep Shearing” or “Vocal Solos”. Near the Tiananamen Square, he found a huge basketball court. Iyer could understand that the Chinese were familiar with all the American ways. The country gradually is found tending towards Western culture, especially that of America.
The New China had accommodated the expatriate communities in the Foreigner’s Compound. He found African kids playing there. Muslim mothers pushed prames with children. The Friendship store supplied all items to the foreigners and they socialized at the International Club. “Aliens” his host explained, “did enjoy a little more freedom now than they had done in the past...” (*VNIK* 113). Jianguo served up dishes to foreign residents. This area made the author think that the Chinese were very careful and skillful because they did not want the locals to mix with the foreigners. While “old” China enchanted him, “new” China did not come up to his expectations.

The intelligence of China was obvious to the writer when he was in Beijing. China had already planned which piece of the West should enter their soil. It wanted development. Iyer writes, “China wanted progress, and progress meant the West” (*VNIK* 114). The hidden agenda “to make the foreign serve China” was noticeable (*VNIK* 114). Foreign influences were welcomed then. It allowed “importing Western goods methods and funds – everything, so it hoped, but Western values” (*VNIK* 114). Foreigners had been admitted. Thousands of foreigners came to China. The diplomats such as Geraldine Ferraro, Robert Dole and Tip ‘O Neill, Richard Nixon from Washington, Felipe Gonzalez, Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore visited China. The Chancellor of Austria arrived in Chengdu when the author got there. Iyer writes that four million foreigners rushed to China “in the boom year of 1984” (*VNIK* 115). China opened up to the West at last. But the author was not happy about the way the foreigners were treated there. He writes that “Foreign residents
lived like diplomats, or prisoners, within their imperial – and imperialist – compounds; tourists, meanwhile, were transported around the country inside a kind of capitalists’ cordon sanitaire” (VNIK115). To Iyer, the country emerged as a superpower as the Chinese government intended and planned.

In Beijing, he listened to two young Chinese, saying “American Club, No. one”. Break Dance” shouted the other. “Disco! Break Dance! Disco!” cried the other friend(VNIK 122). On the radio, he could listen to foreign music, Hawaiian music and also the “Instrumental: My Sweetheart: A Lovable Rose”. The author points out that their world had changed. The transition symbolically meant embracing the Westerner’s culture.

In Beijing, the capital town, the images of both Old and New were present. Old structures were not removed. Old monuments were maintained and protected. It’s men were found in ill – fitting suits, baggy trousers and women preferred jackets. The poor peasants were speechless and silent. Old men looked surprised at viewing the brand new world around them. Iyer noticed the other Beijing also. He joined Jimi Florcurz for a glass of beer at the American Club. The New China’s bowling lane was splendidly set up. The waiting rooms in the Beijing airport had been attractively decorated. It offered all facilities to the travellers. The flight to Chengdu looked elegant. He was impressed by the hospitality of the stewardesses. In a main street, “First Blood” was screened. Film songs blared out from radios. Some shows and
movies entertained him. The “bright – lit streets” filled his heart with joy. The place looked very different and he felt that he was somewhere outside Beijing or Chengdu.

He gazed in wonder seeing at the vibrancy and the dynamism of the place. Iyer felt that the place had much changed than Bombay or Jakarta. Huge advertising hoardings and coloured lights adorned the streets. The White Swan Hotel, built on a lakeside, boasted with waterfalls in the lobby, gardens, swimming pools, tennis court, services for babies and a health club. It extended all facilities offered by the world’s leading hotels. The changes were visible in China with the international audience there. The outcome of the inter – cultural interactions between the tourist community and the Chinese could be seen by the writer. Changes had occurred as the result of adaptation and acculturation.

The magazines the author picked up to read contained the details about the country’s first fast food-joint in Tiananmen Square, the first highway over the Heavenly Mountain, the first American movie shot entirely in China and the first credit – card conference, the first beauty contest, the first rock concert, a luxury resort constructed in the valley of Ming Toms, fashion shows in Beijing, the arrival of bars, TVs and refrigerators. Even the first case of AIDS was reported by the government, he notes. When the writer toured in China, he noticed that in Chengdu, however, the old and the new China had gone strangely mixed. Sanyo, Seiko and songs were the new signs in the Mao’s world. The radio announced its songs for the day. It was to offer “Phoenix” Shaped Hairpin at 3.30, “Foreign Music Thank you; Coffee – Bean Grinding: A Song”
at 6.00, “Medley of Themes from Hawaiian Music at 6.30 and “Instrumental: My Sweetheart: A Lovable Rose” at 7.30. The writer shows how America’s pop – culture, cultural materials, artefacts and fashions conquered China. Also, he exposes the explosion of video culture in China.

The tourism boom in China helped improve their economy. Vendors were highly profited by their trades. Tourism flourished in Guangzhou where people flocked to buy things. Men and women spent extravagantly to assimilate West’s fashions and lifeways. Even the country’s leaders liked Western suits. Officials advised to give up chopsticks for knives and forks for hygienic reasons. Tickets for fashion shows were bought paying fifty times more than the original price. Consumer goods, high – tech radios, cameras, cassettes were the products which were displayed for sale in the crowded shopping streets in Guangzhou. Shelves in the bookshops displayed English novels and magazines. Official slogans he noticed said, “To Get Rich Is Glorious”, “Sacrifice for Socialism” and “Capitalism can’t harm us” (VNIK 145). The west’s materialism attracted the Chinese. The author writes, “nobody knew anywhere what was right or what was wrong, or even what was left; the door it seemed, was swinging wildly on its hinges” (VNIK 145). To his delight and amazement, China, “the long – Xenophobic country” (VNIK 146) had broken the wall that isolated them. Their extreme dislike or fear of Westerners, their customs, their religion, etc. disappeared when China allowed the West to penetrate with its culture.
The author recalls the Cultural Revolution and tells how China once offered its extreme resistance. China had begun to change its ways. The country was not hostile to the idea of change as such. Shacks and open fields disappeared when many-story homes and office towers occupied its place. Shekhou sparkled with rows of beautifully designed apartment buildings. The area was peopled with Japanese businessmen. “The Japanese tried to conquer us with arms, and they failed. Now they have managed to conquer us with trade”, Joe said (VNIK 147). The main shopping streets of Shenzhen had computerland store, an international arcade, a forty – nine story building, an ice-cream parlour, an air - conditioned supermarket, a Citibank and a country club. Even more taxis and mini – buses were in China. A costly theme – park was set up. In Shenzhen, Hong Kong dollars were permitted. He tells that “Indeed, if Guangzhou looked like a mirror image of Hong Kong - Sheuzhen was effectively just a superior Hong Kong: most of the vacationers here had come over from the crown colony in order to make the most of splashy store, high-tech offers, bright – play grounds even glitzier than those at home” (VNIK 147). China felt the modernising influences brought about by the processes of globalisation.

The writer was amazed by the sudden development of the New China. The Chinese had accommodated the changes and learned to be at ease with the Westerners. It seemed to the author that the Chinese community can not remain a closed society in the changing world. Though Iyer is a bit disappointed by “China’s careful courtship with the West” (VNIK 132), he aptly concludes that “China had finally entered the
twenty – first century” (VNIK 144). Now with its policy of opening out, it is going through a phase of rapid transformation. The changing scenario in China’s attitude to the West, especially in its stance to the developed countries marks the improvement and development of the country and its governance.

The author reached The Philippines to see what the country had copied from the West. “Where There Is Music,” said a T-shirt in a Mabini gift store, “There can’t Be Misery” (VNIK166). Marco’s Manila flooded with music. Music was everywhere in Manila. The country withstood the penetration of pop culture and it remained resistless to America’s pop-cultural imperialism. “In Emrita” Iyer writes. “I felt as if I were living inside a Top 40 radio station” (VNIK 164). Wherever the author turned, hand – written signs said, “Wanted: Young Attractive and Beautiful Sexy Dancer,” “Wanted “Sexy Karaoke Singers,” “Wanted: A-Go-Go Girl or Receptionist with Pleasing Personality” and “Wanted: Sexy Dancers, Receptionists” (VNIK156). The country needed pleasing girls for their entertainment business.

Beer gardens, folk clubs, pool halls, Karaoke clubs, stylish bars, disco clubs, “playboy club,” folk – music club, “sing – along pubs” were blasting out love songs, pop songs and loud music. These “autonomous zones” offered them freedom. “We are the World” and “Born in the U.S.A” were the songs that were played out by most of the pubs, bars and hotels. “If I had closed my eyes, I could have believed myself in Tucumcari, New Mexico, or listening to some jukebox in Cheynne,” the author astonishes (VNIK172). The Chalet Suisse Bar in Ermita, the Scandinavia, the Aussie
Bar, the Sahara Club, the Oasis, the Arabic Club, the Arabian Nights, the Sultan Café, and Maxim’s Café entertained the Western audience with “short – skirted” Filipinos (VNIK154). The author noted that the exchanges between the two sides have multiplied. The changes were expressive of the silent communication between the East and the West. According to Pramod K. Nayar, “Cultural Studies looks at mass or popular culture and everyday life” (6). The author records the practices and artefacts shared by the masses, because “cultural studies argue that the objects and artefacts that are used - made sense of - by the masses must be taken seriously” (Nayars 6). Because “lifestyle and consumption of cultural artefacts in everyday life go together,” to use Nayar’s observation” (29). Everyday life in cities is fully hybrid.

The Filipinos exactly imitated the Western rhythms and tunes. Iyer writes, the Filipino is the “master of every American gesture, conversant with every Western song, polished and ebullient, all at once the Filipino plays minstrel to the entire continent” (VNIK 153). Postmodernism argues that “we live in a world of signs, where the signs are ends in themselves and need not refer to any reality, and we cannot, therefore, know the difference between original and image, reality and illusion” (Nayar 69). The author was intoxicated by the fusion music. Music, the author considers, is symbolic of the Filipinos’ emotional needs and they seemed to claim their identity through music. An American correspondent Iyer met in Manila said:

“Music is definitely the single best thing here. There’s one singer in Davao they call the Stevie Wonder. And there’s another woman locally who’s the
Barbara Streisand of the Philippines. That’s how they make it big here. You know one reason why the Filipinos love ‘We are the World’ so much? Because it gives one member of the group the chance to do Michael Jackson, and another Cyndi Lauper and a third Bruce Springsteen. Some guy even gets to do Ray Charles.”(173)

The author shows the influence of the Western models on the Filipinos and how they respond emotionally to construct a new form of identity.

The foreigners were attracted by Filipinos. They are the “natural charmers” (VNIK 153). They are known for their hospitality worldwide. “The Filipinos had long, I discovered been masters of every aspect of Asia’s hospitality business,” the writer comments (VNIK153). Filipinos are everywhere. They have entered Japan for “entertainment trade”(VNIK154). He read from the Jakarta Post that “foreign entertainers were always popular because they could satify more customers by revealing their bodies during performances”(VNIK154). The author found that the Filipinos are great entertainers to the tourist community. The author points to the poor life of the Filipinos. They lived in abject poverty and that pushed them to prostitution. According to government satistics, “Seven in every ten of her people were living under the poverty level”(VNIK179). In Manila, girls prepared to sell their bodies because of complete desperation. “Sadness and music were everywhere I looked in the Marco’s Manila, smiles and rags. In all my travels, I had never seen poverty so open and so crushing ...
I found ... beggars and whores,” Iyer tells (VNIK159). The Filipinos joined the bars to support their families.

The author even burst forth into lamentation when Minnie told him “one bar girl in the family is enough!” (VNIK181). She once had an abortion as a teenager and the British executive who married her deserted her with a bar that she closed within a year due to heavy loss. Sarah, a waitress at Calle Cinguo, was a wretched lady. Rachel, a seventeen-year-old girl, left her class at 10.30 every morning to appear for her TV show in the studio she worked. Iyer listened to many such pitiful stories from the Filipinos. He took pity on them. He called back to mind the T-shirt that hung in a mabini gift shop saying, “Music Is the Medicine of a Troubled Mind” (VNIK 166). Amidst all their sadness, the Filipinos served in air-conditioned bars and motels. The intercultural dialogue and co-existence principle pleased the writer.

When the author entered a restaurant a pretty waitresses handed him a copy of its menu. To his amazement, the local menus were fanciful and exciting. My Father’s Mustache offered “Butch Cassidy and the Sandwitch Kid” and “Wild Beef Hick Cock”. The Hard Rock Café served up dishes titled “GI Blues,” “Star – Spangled Bannar,” “Army – Navy,” “Loving Spoonfuls” and Johny’s B. Goode” (VNIK 175). Both locals and tourists liked the dishes offered by the restaurants and food-joints. Kentucky Fried Chicken Parlours, Donuts outlets, Mc Donald’s had sprouted up everywhere in the Philippines. The author sees the cuisines in various combinations as mergers between cultures. The tourists could assimilate into the host culture immediately. He
emphasises the global cultural interconnectedness in the form of music and food habits.

In Manila, the video revolution had brought in dreamers in search of enlightenment. Everywhere America’s presence was felt by the author. Music modelled on America’s pop songs filled the streets of Manila. All the entertainment centres were alive with all things imported from America. The visitors had grown accustomed to living in the Philippines. The foreigners had no heart to say goodbye to the Filipinos for their matchless hospitality. The writer tells, “thus I left the Philippines. But the Philippines did not so easily leave me. For months, I could not get the country out of my head: it haunted me like some pretty plaintive melody” (VNIK 191). Iyer thought, calling back to his mind the kind of life in the country, the Philippines was “born in the U.S.A” (VNIK 151). The people there identify them with the global community at least through the Western music and songs.

Setting foot in Burma he found himself surrounded by the “faded remnants” of the British Empire. “The isolationist Burma” had protected the past (VNIK 27). Amitav Ghosh in his Dancing in Combodia, At Large in Burma has tried to comprehend Burma and its extreme isolation. He weighs the country in historical perspective and analyses how the time has roughly flown in the country. Their guiding motto was: “preserve” and “protect”. Mingaladon, the country’s only international airport, lacked the facility to accommodate 7475 or even DC-IOS. “The tourist Burma”, Iyer noted, showed no enthusiasm to welcome visitors. The country looked deserted and empty.
“Shabby, dark little booths offered Cake and Snacks” (VNIK 198). Many of the buildings were not visited by people. In Burma, “time itself had been sentenced to life imprisonment and History was held under house arrest,” Iyer records (VNIK199). Iyer weighs the flow of time in the place. Forigners were allowed to visit only five places in Burma and tourists were once not allowed to stay for more than twenty-four hours. Later, they allowed tourist to stay for seven days. Visitors were not permitted to enter the country by land. Only some international carriers flew to Rangoon. The author got surprised when a woman he met in Burma said, “here in Burma we live in the eighteenth century” (VNIK 201). Burma had distanced itself for decades from the modern world outside. “Burma was one of the only countries I had ever seen that was not goosestepping toward a brave new world of videos and burgers, but was content to mind its own business and go on its own way,” Iyer says (VNIK 203). Burma did not permit the foreign influences to enter the soil.

There were no high-rise blocks, fast – food joints, no girls for [entertainment business] and no drugs. Iyer experienced the innocence of Burma and he finally seems to find what he is searching for. There, the country’s no neon signs, no VCRs and no MTV disappointed him. It appears that Burma fulfils the author’s need for a spatially distant paradise. The writer’s descriptions of over-grown cricket fields, broken statues and unattractive menus showcase the remnants of colonialism preserved by the Burmese. He finds the personal and political effects of British imperialism in Burma which ran so deep in the life of the Burmese. He recalls how the “Old Burma” was a
great attraction to the Britishers during the colonial days. Burma was very cautious not to allow other influences. But Burma enchanted Iyer though it curiously preserved the British ideals. Iyer was attracted by Buddhism there. He noticed signs everywhere that advised: “Be kind to Animals by not Eating them.” “No Feet Wearing,” said a sign at the entrance to every pagoda. “Smoking, Drinking and Flesh is Strictly Prohibited within the Sikh Temple Premises” was the sign outside a shrine. “A Drunk Person is not Allowed Admission” warned another sign near a pagoda (VNIK 207). These signs aptly reflected the makers of the nation, the author thought.

Their manners and polite ways impressed Iyer. “The Burmese seemed an uncommonly jolly and guileless people, not veiled or stealthy as other Southeast Asians could be, but sunny and open as their plains,” the writer praises (VNIK 207). Their respectfulness and politeness energized the author. Their strict sense of decency was a surprise to him when they came up to him for selling their items. The Burmese were extraordinarily frank and polite. In the case of the Burmese the most discernible quality he notes is their love for animals and their common humility in them.

Changes were not so much when the author visited Burma two years after. Some tourists had visited. The streets of Rangoon were a little brighter and people were busily moving here and there. A T-shirt that a boy had worn read, “The Diana Ross Story by Leonard Pickens Jr., and he heard a song “Riders on the Storm”. He noticed some other developments. They could afford TVs and a new Datsun. When Jain, his guide, took him to a park they happened to notice three persons who were
drunk. Jain told him, “they are not gays. They are looking for gays to make love to” (VNIK 212). The author registered his surprise. Excepting a few changes there Burma was the same old Burma. There was not much transformation there. “It was, I thought, a lost world in both senses of the words: a remnant from the past, but also a baffled child trying to make its way about an adult universe” (VNIK 215). The country seemed to suffer from nostalgia. A Burmese soldier recalled that “Rangoon Airport was one of the great international centers of Asia. Now ... “Gosh,” he said, “Rangoon was glorious. We had one of the best educational systems in Asia. We had dignity too. But now ...” (VNIK 216). Like the soldier, almost everybody looked back, talked and thought nostalgically. Even Kipling, the writer tells, nostalgically looked back to Mandalay. Their nostalgia was heavily felt by them for decades after decades. The Burmese chose to live with the memories of the British Raj forever. Burma’s distinctive temperament was amusement to Iyer. The country’s lack of development because of internal strifes reflects on all aspects of life and situations.

Arriving at Hong Kong’s Kai Tak Airport he registers his astonishment. The terminal looked to him as much as Americas’ O’ Hare. According to Tom Wolfe, it is the capital of America” (qtd. in VNIK 222). The energy and enterprise there filled him with wonder. Travellers were swarming in from everywhere and waited for their journeys to K.L., Bangkok and Manila. Thais, Filipinos Japanese, Australians and Indians were moving. The author writes that everywhere, “people on the rise, on the move, on the go” (VNIK 222). The city, Iyer foretells, would emerge as a multinational empire
to rule the future worlds. Hong Kong’s economy flourished. Tourism and trade contributed millions to the country’s economy. Hong Kong grew so fast with the contribution of the immigrant community there. Robert Fraser, discussing Ondaatje and Yvonne Vera, says:

Among the achievements of the age of high imperialism, which was also the great railway age was the creation of the a new kind of city. Empires thrive on trade; trade feeds off industries; industries require centres of collection, transportation and distribution ... For the inhabitants of such settlements, the defining moment was that of arrival. (44)

The immigrant is a participant in the capital formation of such new cities, wherever it be in the world. The arrival itself is perceived to be the epiphany of one’s life. As the author taxied along the roads, the frantic development of Hong Kong was very much obvious. Mercedeces, Rolls and Porche were sighted by him. High-rises, fluorescent lights, the glittering harbour, multiplex cinemas, multistory car parks, hotels, restaurants and multistory apartments announced the arrival of Hong Kong in “The Empire’s New clothes” (VNIK 221). Change was not new to Hong Kong. Skyscrapers were erected by the government “every seven minutes” (VNIK 228). Suburbs were coming up. The fluorescent lights were substituted for the Sun. “In 1985,” Iyer writes, “Hong Kong was always one of the fastest places to adapt to the latest trend ...” (VNIK 228).
When the author travelled in Hong Kong the country had blossomed as “an expat city.” It had given shelter to transients and refugees. It was densely populated with Chinese. Hong Kong was home to investment bankers, “over-achievers” *(VNIK 224)*, international businessmen, “racketeers, drug dealers, gangsters and abortionists” *(VNIK 225)*. Hong Kong meant freedom for all. Businessmen crowded because it promised plenty without any tax. An American investment banker told Iyer that “Business and shopping are the only things to do here” *(VNIK 225)*. It offered opportunities to the prospective traders and businessmen in the “special economic zone” *(VNIK 224)*. The city was a promised land for the contraband performers. “In Hong Kong,” said a cabbie, “there’s lots of freedom. You have money, you can do anything” *(225)*. International audience rushed to Hong Kong to multiply their money. A Chinese banker from Harvard Business School explained, “In Hong Kong today to be rich is to be powerful” *(VNIK 228)*. Rich men haunted Hong-Kong with many business ventures. The entire colony then had just 400 houses. But there were 1,500 millionaires whose wealth was more than 100 million, he gathered. “Money” Iyer aptly puts, “was the opium of the masses” *(VNIK 229)*. Everybody there is very money-minded.

The author negotiated with many a foreigner there. “In 1985,” Iyer writes, “for the first time in History, there were more Americans in Hong Kong than Brits” *(VNIK 228)*. Bright young American couples in Lacoste shirts and blue blazers, panpsuits and Reeboks were waiting for their taxis. He gathered that Cathay Pacific had appointed
their hostesses from the Asian countries. A British merchant-banker told, “most of my female friends here are Oriental. But all my male friends are British” (VNIK 238). In Haley’s Rock and Roll Club a long–haired Tamil was singing raucous backup and couple of bespectacled Chinese... were laying down some pragmatic bass lines” (VNIK 239). The Chinese chatted with the British. The author shot the interaction between the Chinese and the foreigners. The expatriate life in Hong Kong arrested his attention. “Hong Kong was a large international city that offered something for everyone” (VNIK 235). The international community there lived a comfortable, harmonious life. It was coming to resemble “the capital of the modern world” (VNIK 230). That is why Hong Kong is dreamed as a sought after - place to translate one’s mission and vision into action. Though, Hong Kong seems to be a place of crimes and contraband trades, the author focuses the nation’s progress and its determination to keep up with the times.

Pico Iyer discusses the Indian film industry in his chapter on India. According to him, the Indian film industry makes so many movies each year like the U.S. film industry. He gathered that almost 100 million cinema tickets were sold in India every week. The Indian film industry boasted with nearly 5000 touring theatres and more moving projection units [than in Britain]. The film industry produced more than 800 films in several languages every year. When he flew in to Bombay, he saw hundreds of people watching the cinemas in “silver screens” late at night. He had listened to film songs from radios and cassettes while he was touring in India. His uncle told him that
he had bought a flat next to Zeenat Aman, “screen darling of the subcontinent” (VNIK 245). He had seen huge billboards with names of films shown in the city. He found that “Hindi movies were everywhere in India” (VNIK 246). He had watched men and women discussing and analyzing the role of characters in Hindi films. He writes that Hindi movies were popular in other Asian nations too. He had seen Indian films in village theatres in Nepal and Indonesia. He had watched an Australian documentary on the Indian industry in Japan. Hindi films were popular in other countries also. He was pleased to listen to when a Turkish cabdriver lectured on Raj Kapoor. Raj Kapoor’s Aswara was viewed by most of the people in the then Soviet Union. Hindi films were screened in Peru. The author himself watched a Hindi film once at the Bombay Cinema, in Manhattan. Hindi movies were exported to more than a hundred countries around the world, Iyer notes. Hindi films has the power to have an effect on people around the world. David Held et al in their Global Transformations (1999) identify cinema as an empowered agent of cultural globalization. Cultural Studies looks at mass cinema as the culture of the everyday life of many a people.

The Indian film industry surprised the author. He learned that Shashi Kapoor had agreed to act in 140 films simultaneously. Song writers and musicians were too busy working for various producers. Lata Mangeshkar set a world record by completing her 30,000 recordings. A film critic once told him that many people saw Saagar and Mard more than ten times. The secret behind this is, the author observes, that the producers are aware of the viewers’ likes and dislikes.
The writer is more interested to find, during his travel in India, the popularity of Hollywood films in India. This delightful book begins that “RAMBO HAD conquered Asia” (VNIK 3). *First Blood* was viewed by a million people in China. In Thailand, he saw huge cutouts of Rambo. In Indonesia, vendors offered posters of President Suharto, Siva and Stallone. “Rambo was unrivalled as the most powerful force in Asia that autumn”, the author writes (VNIK 4). The Bangkok papers advertised that “No man, no law, no woman can stop him” (qtd.in VNIK 4). *The Rambo* was a big hit in almost every country. Hollywood’s *Halloween*, *Halloween II* and *Halloween III* and *Commando* were some of the films advertised in the papers. According to the author, “Hollywood, not Bombay, is the capital of glamour, the nerve center of show-biz, the source of every trend” (VNIK 252). The producers imitated certain successful trends which worked out well in Hollywood films. The Indian film industry even copied certain camera techniques and dance sequences from the Western cinemas. The author came to know from Sippy, a Bombay producer, that several of the U.S. movies were turned into an Indian one. Movies are hybridized today. *Gone with the Wind*, *Ben – Hur*, *Flesh Dance*, *Man*, *Woman* and *Child*, and *Saturday Night Fever* were big hits in India. The Film City in Bombay resembled Hollywood, the author felt. When he visited the studio complex, nine or ten movies were in the process of production.

The author thoroughly analyses politics, religion, social life, customs, practices, beliefs, lifestyles and dreams in India and draws a parallel between the real life and that of Hindi films. The realities are reflected in Hindi movies. All the experiences in
India took him by surprise. He says, “every trip through India was to some extent a magical mystery tour into chaos and colour and commotion”(VNIK 261). Also the author highlights the Indian people’s “lust for foreign goods” and their “dream to go abroad”(VNIK 273). Arvind, the author’s friend in Pushkar expressed his desire to travel to Singapore and Bangkok. The writer says, “I had met scores of Arvinds in Indonesia and Nepal and China and most heart-rendering of all in every closed country from Burma to Cuba to Nicavagua” (VNIK 277). He shares one of his experiences when he journeyed in Ajmer. He says, his drivers “decided to supplement their business. They made a bid for my jeans. They promised to sell me a girl. They offered to give me a girl in exchange for my jeans” (VNIK 274). America’s fashions fascinated them.

His journey to find the tourist bungalow in Pushkar, as Seth tells about his journey in Tibet, “was a hitch hiking journey” (From Heaven Lake 113). This shows his strong desire for novelty and adventure but also of his desire for wandering being an intimate personal need and that is the reason why he travels though he faces many trials and tribulations.

During the author’s expedition in India, he observed that the nation was very interested in following American fashions and models. According to him, “modern India, especially under Rajiv, was hell – bent on following the way of the future, generally considered to be the American way” (VNIK 278). He found that India was taking on more of the “bright new futurism of America” (VNIK 279). At the same time, the author tells that East was attraction to the West. He notes that “even many
of the foreigners who came to India came, after a while, to seem Indian. This process had begun when some of the eccentric Brits of the Raj ... had decided to go native. It continued with those flocks of Western believers who had come over to India, donned orange robes and taken to the ascetic life” (VNIK 280). The author here points to the growing transactions between the East and the West. He was sure to understand this bond, as it got reflected in the films, when he was invited by Masud, “a typical Indian gentlemen of distinction” to join him for breakfast at the Cricket Club of India (VNIK 281). Seeing the cricketers in their motions he tells, “we could almost, I thought, have been in Oxford. He saw “a few girls in polka – dot dresses and high heels rambled around the pitch in the warm sea breeze” (VNIK 281). Western ways entered in the lives of the Easterners. The author concludes with a powerful example to show how the Eastern influence on the West was felt through New Wave movies. Many producers make art movies to please Westen audiences. Holi is one such movie which the author himself had seen in many years. The film is about a group of nihilistic students to whom life meant meaningless and nothing. The film ends with a suicide. The film, addressed a serious problem and shot the youths fighting gloom and despair. The audience in America liked this film and critics praised. The author points out there are a good number of audiences in the West for Indian movies.

Indian’s poverty and natural disasters terrified him when the author flew in to India. The “numbers” shocked him while he journeyed in India. Many deaths, many killings, many accidents, many kidnaps and many mishaps frightened him. The slums
of Bombay reflected the pitiful conditions of those who live in the very untidy, poor and crowded areas in his parents’ Bombay where they both grew up. He writes, “five million of its people live in slums or on the streets” (TC 63). Dharavi is “the largest slum in Asia inhabited by six lakh people in less than one square mile” (TC 70). Yet, Bombay looked “the capital of the Hope” for the New – comers who arrive there in search of fortunes (TC 63). The visitors find more openings in Bombay than their homes. The apartments there are more expensive than anything in Tokyo or New York. The city’s “mingled origins” was an attraction to the author. The city had been rebuilt by the Maharashtrian settlers, Parsees, Muslims, Gujaratis and Jews. Iyer could observe “all the signs of a bright new city” (TC 64). Sumos, Marutis and Zens moved in large numbers. He saw advertisements for Pizza Hut, Baskins – Robbins, “even a Mexican restaurant”(TC 64). He had access to 17 different channels in his hotel. The city continued to inhabit different cultures. The Catholic Syrian Bank and the National Hindu Hotel were near. The Aladin Restaurant offered “Moghal, Punjabi, Chinese, Singapore Fried Rice, Chicken, American Chop Suey and Szechwan Fried Rice” (TC 67). The City aquarium he visited had a fish with a Quaranic verse on its back, and a crab with “Christian Cross” on it. The shopping streets in the suburbs boasted with Lady Diana Tailors and Dreamer’s Delight, Eros, Hair – cutting saloon and the clip joint beauty clinic and school. Young boys were found in T-shirts. Some New Yorkers roamed in orange robes. Iyer noted the signs of transiton in the place as it ran fast with the “multinational future” (TC 70). The people in Bombay had begun to assimilate
Western lifestyles. He saw youngsters in a modern pub drinking frozen banana daiquiris and cocktails known as “Sexual Delight”. Girls were found in University of Miami T-shirts and boys in tight 50IS (TC 71). The cultural change in the place caught him by surprise. A magical transformation of the place announced that Bombay had begun to keep up with the changing times.

Thailand was sex industry to Pico Iyer. The author uses the country as a transparent metaphor for the seduction of the West by the East. In the case of the author, though he is a teetotaller, he spent most of his evenings in the bars of Thailand. The writer wants the readers to understand how a place affects an individual. In his interview with Shoma Chaudhury, he says, “... it is also true that places to some extent remake us, recast us in their own images, and the selves they awaken may tell us as much about them as about ourselves” (29). Iyer points out the necessity to develop a flexible sense of the self when a tourist or an individual happens to meet a new situation. This would help him fit himself into a new environment.

Upon arriving in Thailand he gives the snapshot of the tourists’ Thailand. The author noticed the signs that said, “Bank of Love” and “Have a good time in Thailand!” The signs over there advertised recreation and pleasure that the country assured for its visitors. The author tells, “it was a city, they said, whose main industry was recreation and whose main business was pleasure” (VNIK 290). Everything was possible in the “free – and – easy Bangkok” (VNIK 290). Thailand had long been famous for “smuggled goods, fake Rolexes, pirated cassettes, hard drugs, forged passports and IDs” (VNIK
290). But he liked the gentleness and the grace of the Thais. Alan, a British Photographer he met in Bali amused that “Ah, such a charming people, and yet the streets of Bangkok are really so terribly wicked” (VNIK 290). One could not even believe a monk in the “bad Bangkok” (VNIK 290). The same photographer told Iyer that he had been invited by a monk to join him for a drink and then he was asked by the monk whether he was sleeping alone. “And he a monk! But still you know, the Thais are really such a charming people”, the photographer thought (VNIK 290). The author exposes the wickedness there.

Everything was available for sale in Bangkok. The author gathered from a Britisher that a boy or a girl could be bought for life for a few dollars along the roads of northern Thailand. Virgins were auctioned in villages and young girls were sent to bars as breadwinners to the family. The government was not ashamed of advertising the pleasure trade. The “skin trade” (VNIK 291) flourished in Thailand. Yellow pages advertised massage parlours and bars. Brochures announced “special sex-tour vacations” (VNIK 291) for the Japanese, the Germans and the Arabs. “By now in fact, an estimated sixty percent of all the country’s visitors came only for the dirt – cheap sex, and more than a million girls were waiting to oblige them,” Iyer records (VNIK 291). The Westermers flocked to Bangkok for fantasy.

The writer could see that Bangkok had the perfect setting for the epidemic of AIDS with bar – girls, heroin addicts and gays. Some foreigners and the locals died of the syndrome. The writer writes that “in 1985, many Asians considered the single
great import from the West, after Rambo, to be AIDS” (VNIK7). Foreigners did not seem to respond to this threat seriously. The visitors he met there from Britain, India, South Bronx, San Francisco, Australians, Germans and Arab countries guaranteed him to get “fourteen, fifteen – year – old girls” (VNIK 292).

The conditions were so very perfect in Thailand for the “fantasy business” (VNIK 291). Jukeboxes played out “Do It to ME” and “Slow Hand” and “Da Ya Think I’m Sexy” (VNIK 291). The bar scenes were so ugly, “and the more I looked at the bar scene, the more my vision blurred,” comments the writer (VNIK 300). “Short-time hotels”, “girlie bars”, sex shows, massage parlours, “pickup coffee shops, brothels, discos and VD clinics caught him by surprise (VNIK 294).

The author says that he was safe nowhere: When he hired a taxi, the driver asked him whether he wanted “a private girl” (VNIK 294). The barbershop he entered promised private rooms. A tourist hotel he checked into provided girls in the lobby. Video screens everywhere offered sexy scenes and nude bodies of the Thai girls to pull the tourists. Thailand easily upsets the writer. He writes:

The city, in fact, made me decidedly squeamish. Just to be exposed to such a society was, I thought, to contract a kind of social disease; just to be here was to be guilty. Not for nothing, I told myself, did “Thailand” mean Land of the Free”. Taken in by Bangkok’s willingness to take one in, I felt myself outraged; Bangkok was dangerously easy conclusion.” (VNIK 296)
The young author found himself caught in the “sin city” (VNIK 292). It is true that Bangkok shocked him. But later he realized that his first reaction to Bangkok was not right. The “sextrade” and “the system of kept woman” were not imported from the West (VNIK 300). He was relieved of his shock when a Thai lady explained to him that “it was an honored tradition for men here to relieve their wives of certain pressures by spending a few nights now and then with concubines” (VNIK 300). He learned from an American guidebook that single, male visitors from Asian countries flew in Thailand than the Americans. He made sure that West is not exploiting the East. Unlike in Manila, Iyer writes, “in Bangkok, the crystal palaces of sex were only extra adornments in a bejeweled city that already glittered with ambiguities” (VNIK 309). At the same time the author lends a sympathetic ear to the wretched women like Kai, Nitya, Janjira and Ead who sold their flesh for money out of sheer desperation.

Though the writer captures the tourist trade in Thailand, he flew in to the city to take note of the courtship between the East and the West. He writes:

And everywhere I went in Thailand, were even more graphic examples of the country’s relations with the West; here a ruddy-faced foreigner lumbering along the feather-skinned lovely, there a plump pale arm around slender brown shoulders in the back of a red-lit, three-wheel taxi, here a middle-aged executive cutting some deal on the sidewalk with a doe-eyed Lolita, there two sloppy-shirted, unshaven tourists nuzzling a pair of dancing girls in a restaurant, while the nymphs tittered fetching and put flowers in their suitor’s
thinning hair ... and this curious parade of Occidental Adams and Oriental Eves ... seemed a moralist’s gift, a symbol – monger’s delight. (VNIK 299)

Pico Iyer is picturing the people whom he met in the “market place for romance” (VNIK 301) and that curious mix delighted him.

In Japan, the theme is baseball and Iyer portrays the Japanese passion for the American game. The truth is that baseball is not a funny game in Japan. The game shows their conviction and their intention to use their hard work to “conquer” the West, especially America through trade and the game. Also, he ventures into New China, to sample the modern Japan. When the writer landed in Japan, the “baseball fever was sweeping the country” (VNIK 317). Commentaries and scores caught his attention. Newspapers and networks covered the sports news. Tina, a horse – trainer in Japan from Seattle, uttered that “Baseball is the All – American sport. But they’re more fanatic about it here than they are at home” (VNIK 318). The crowd too behaved so. Their obsession affected Iyer. He tells that the enthusiasm of the fans influenced him. He writes that “Caught up in the sound and the fury, I felt myself irresistibly stirred. I also felt a part of a single huge, and single – minded body. All of us were one, I thought; teenagers and kindly – looking grandmas and businessmen, all of us were united in our single common cry. Da da da, da-da da da” (VNIK 322). Though the author is an “outsider” (a gaijin) the crowd drew him and the place transformed him to behave like a native (VNIK 340).
The players’ sincerity astonished the author. He read from *A Zen Way of Baseball* that the “baseball king” Sadaharu Oh changed his name for a year, as advised by a sage, to become a star. He was surprised to learn how Sada’s mother inspired him by her appearance to break Hank Aaron’s World Record. The Japanese players took the game seriously, observes Robert Whiting, a Western expert on Japanese baseball. Iyer observes that “teams above all were managed like Marine camps, in which players had to run endless, mindless exercises in order to toughen their fighting spirit” (*VNIK* 327). As he turned on the TV Dennis Barfield, a U.S. import, was analysing that “it is almost a military-type discipline ...” (*VNIK* 327). The commitment and dedication of the players and the officials amazed him.

The dazzling performance of the teenagers in schools impressed the author. “That,” said Whiting, “was no surprise. Many high schools were in fact nothing more than baseball factories, set up for the assembly-line production of pros” (*VNIK* 329). He saw one team doing a daily “Death Climb” that ran up and down the two-seventy five steps of a Shinto shrine (*VNIK* 329). The American players practised for three hours a day on the field but the Japanese spend eight hours. Though North America was the birthplace of baseball, the special charm of this American baseball in Japan amazed Iyer. “The Japanese game, the author views, seemed thoroughly Japanese, and not much of a game” (*VNIK* 330). The writer is curious to “discover,” as he says, “which Americas got through to the other side of the world, and which got lost in translation” (*VNIK* 5). America’s baseball in Japan took a different form and order.
When the writer set out to chronicle of his Asian travels, he “wanted to see what kind of resistance had been put up against the Coca–colonising forces and what kind of counter-strategies were planned” (VNIK 5). Surely, the writer felt, Japanese baseball was a sports tool used by the Japanese players to “conquer” American culture and American game (VNIK 330).

The writer’s attempt to register America’s presence in Japan was at hand when his eyes fell on the signs there. A department store called American Blvd advertised “Jeans,” “Accessories” and American Spirit”. There were signs for “Jerry Beans” or “Gland Beef” (VNIK 319). The look-alike coffee shops, strip joints, Pizza Huts, Baby centres, pet clubs resembled the same “All – American” properties (VNIK 319). “American – style buffet breakfast” was served in “American – style coffee shop” (VNIK 319). Young Japanese ladies got accustomed to Western fashions and lifestyles. “Radio City”, was a disco there and “The Village Voice a bar” (VNIK 320). Tokyo’s strip joints were crowded with “blondes” (VNIK 319). The author says that every pleasure was imported there “stamped as Made in America”.

The author declares that Tokyo Dishneyland is the most important symbol of modern Japan. He writes that Tokyo Dishneyland “put the American Dishneylands to shame” (VNIK 333). He marvels at the technological innovations in Japan. The Student Times he read had an article titled “Robert walks at almost an Human Speed” (VNIK 333). The Tom and Jerry cartoon featured a robotized mouse called B₃ – Ze. He learnt that the country had developed a female toy robot which costed $ 14,000. Japan
has progressed technologically. Iyer believes in technology as it enriches our life. Fishburn and Rodes tell “technology smooths out the wrinkles of our daily lives” (16). When the author tells about Japan’s modern technology he writes:

... the face of modern Japan afforded a glimpse into a high-tech, low-risk future, a passage into the clean, well-lit corridors of a user-friendly utopia, where men glided on conveyor belts into technocentric cells that were climate-controlled, sweetly scented and euphoniously organized by a PA system. Here was society as microchip, a tiny network of linked energies. Commuters functioned like computers, workmen like walkmen .... (331)

The writer acknowledges the advancement of Japan in the field of technology. He appreciates their “unbending will”, “single-minded determination” and “inhuman commitment” (VNIK 329) to succeed (VNIK 329). He praises their professionalism, dynamism and obsessive perfectionism. They were polite, calm, and hospitable people. Yet the writer tells:

I had to admit that I found Japan quite the most alien society I had ever visited ... I often felt lost and bewildered in Japan. I made contact with none of the expressionless eyes I saw in the street, I never managed to orient myself in its maze of electric possibilities. I could find few signs in English, and still fewer Japanese willing to speak a less than perfect English. Yes, I could skate along the culture’s bright surfaces, but Japan, at heart, seemed a secret society. (VNIK 339)
The writer is sad that Japan keeps the foreigners away or up to a point. When Hsuan L. Hsu talks about the country’s cultural isolationism, he observes that “Japan’s contact with the West ... had hitherto been tentative, highly selective, and carefully regulated” (VNIK 174). Japan wanted to imitate English titles and all things Western. It looked addicted to modernity and change. But “their contents”, as Iyer aptly puts, “were entirely Japanese” (VNIK 319). They protected their tradition with utmost care. Their attitude reflected their sense of commitment for educating the world about themselves and their way of life. The author says further that the Japanese are “the most complex society I had ever seen, and to that extent, the most impossible to ...” (VNIK 330). Hsu views that in Japan “two different kinds of space - near and far, local and global or domestic and international appear adjacent to one another, but they are represented as disjoined and irreconcilable” (VNIK 184). Be it a game, trade or technology, the Japanese, as the author says, are completely Japanese. The author writes in detail the unique quality of each country.

Buddhism in Japan attracted the author. He was enthralled by the beauty of the Zen temples, Zen gardens and the quiet places in Kyoto. Kyoto’s stillness and silence filled his heart with peace. He replies to Shoma Chaudhury in an interview that “one good thing to be said about the chaos and fragmentation and acceleration of the modern world is that it seemed to quicken in many of us a longing for silence and stillness and space ...” (29). It is true that different places have acted on him differently.
His book, *The Lady and the Monk: Four Seasons in Kyoto* (1991) is also about his travels in Japan in the late 1980s in search of Japanese culture today. He decided to spend four seasons in and around a Kyoto temple to learn about Buddhism. The book at once turns into a portrayal of cross-cultural infatuation and communication when the author meets Sachiko, wife of a Japanese “salary man” and mother of two children. Through this Japanese lady Iyer comes to know about “the ancient land of monks” and the new Japan.

Iyer shoots the life of Kyoto’s spectacular malls, night life in temples and back streets, the vulgarity of the Westernized night clubs and amusement quarters, amusement arcades, convenience stores, tea houses and coffee houses, alleyways, “festival lights in the streets”, “busily moving crowds” (*TLATM* 3), the commotion in the streets, the “lamp–lit stalls”, “the lemon–scented mornings” (*TLATM* 3), “rainbow banners” “the gaggles of giggling girls”, “a maze of twisting little lanes” (*TLATM* 36). To the author, Japan, “the land of economic miracle”, was turning to be “the capital of the future tense” (*TLATM* 7).

In Kyoto, Iyer’s first acquaintance was with a monk who recited the American sites he had seen such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Monument Valley, San Antonio, El paso, New Orleans, Washington, Philadepia and New York. He showed Iyer photos of himself taken in front of the Taj Mahal, the Thames and himself with variety of wonders. “The romantic”, “templed city” (*TLATM* 12) was visited by one lakh tourists. The unexpected feature of the place was that there were “curtained parking lots of
love hotels” (TLATM 15). The author understood from many of his readings that there was an intimacy between monks and women in Japanese Literature. Monks were easily be seen in a brothel. Wandering monks have themselves found close to prostitutes. The author himself has seen young Japanese women on the temple campus.

The transition in the place startled the author. He found himself with foreigners with shaven heads and dread locks, Japanese men with pony-tails, Japanese girls with kohl around their eyes and hennaed hair and bangles. One girl, with a ring in her nose, had returned from Tibet. Another woman was found in her Nepali trousers who had settled in Angola. An Aussie with a thick black beard was from New York who joined him for a chat. He acquainted with a girl from Minnesota whose husband was a Japanese dancer. A Japanese woman was telling that she was married to an American. Two German students told him they were interested to hear more about Gion. Mark, his friend in Japan, had grown up in San Francisco and Kathmadu. American monks in the Kyoto temples in large numbers was a surprise to the author. A woman from Santa Barbara was attending her thousand-day course. Etsuko, Mark’s friend from England had ended up as a Zen Monk in DaitoKuji. Thus, Iyer’s world in Japan was made up of such hybrids. Japan seemed to accommodate the changes without any resistance.

The author encountered dirty accounts of the secret lives of the mock—monks in the Kyoto temples. Enough evidences are found everywhere in the book. But he notes and ignores them all and focuses on spiritual aspects. His search for spiritual enlightenment is evident throughout his book. His meetings with many a Zen monk
and his interaction with Mark kindled his interest in Zen. More importantly, his association with Sachiko intensified his quest and he felt powerfully drawn towards the religion of Japan. Iyer says that he was “mysteriously close to the place” (TLATM 5). The quiet Kyoto temples served his purpose when he preferred to live a quiet life. He tells:

In Japan, moreover, I wanted to put another daydream to the test; the vision I had cherished of living simply and alone, in some foreign land, unknown. A life alone was the closest thing to faith I knew, and a life of Thoreauvian quiet seemed most practicable abroad. Japan, besides, seemed the ideal site for such an exercise in solitude .... (TLATM 7)

Kyoto, “the templed city” (TLATM 13) provided a perfect setting to practise Zen. He was enchanted by the silence which was “as calm as prayer.” (TLATM 13) He made temples his home. The paintings on Zen themes on the temple walls, lots and lots of books on Zen widened his knowledge. Sachiko contributed in many ways to learn Zen symbols. He was learning about the practice of Zen and the Zen precepts about attention and compassion even from the salesgirls at McDonald’s. Zen was an attraction to Iyer always. He writes:

One reason I had always been interested in Zen was my sense that for people like myself, trained in abstraction, Zen could serve as the ideal tonic. For Zen, as I understood it, was about slicing with a clean sword through all the Gordian Knots invented by the mind, plunging through all specious dualities – east and
west, here and there, coming and going to get to some core so urgent that its truth could not be doubted. The best lesson that Zen could teach ... was to go beyond a kind of thinking that was nothing more than agonizing, and simply act. In that sense, Zen reminded me of Johnson’s famous refutation of Berkeley by kicking a stone. It was unanswerable as pain. (TLATM 65)

Zen offered him direction, focus and discipline. The author highlights how travel causes beneficial consequences that elevates the position of the beneficiaries. In Japan, the author felt, the Zen life “elevated men in to monks ...” (VNIK 330).

Iyer’s lens captured Japan’s transition. The Japanese these days responded resistlessly to Western influences and adapted to Western fashions. The Japanese crowded in the city’s coffee shops, Bobby Soxer Pizza, Atelier café, Ergo Bibamus restaurant, Notre Quotidien Pain and La casa Felic, Ringo Coffee Shop, Mozaral coffee shop, Kentucky Fried Chicken Parlours and McDonald’s Pachinko parlours. Iyer gives a long list of these new additions in Japan in order to show the transformation in Japan with the arrival of the West in the East.

The author was taken aback by the facilities available in Japan. Vending machines provided noodles, soup, all kinds of fruit juice, tea, coffee, Coco Cola, tickets for movies, temples, zoos, batteries, beer, bottles of sake and cartons of milk. “I felt I was living in a world of vending machines through all the quiet lanes in the dark” (TLATM 38). It seemed to him that “Japan was colonizing the future” with its rich
facilities. The author noted the place’s transformation and the people’s lifestyles. The Japanese accommodated the changes and accustomed to the changing trends.

Pico Iyer’s travels in the Asiatic lands revealed to him many facts about the postmodern world. To his great astonishment, Asia had noticeably transformed. The Asiatic cities he visited were in a transition mode due to globalisation, tourism and technology. From the time when Asia first attracted seekers after trade, wealth, adventure, fun and finally knowledge, until today, its fascination has never been lost. When the writer ventured into Asian nations, tourists overflowed there in search of Oriental romance and “Asiastic Wisdom” (Brunton 24). The heavy flow of tourists had brought in transformation and beneficial consequences. Asia had progressed much. To his great shock, modern high-rises and glittering towers had sprouted up like the Western countries. Western-style food-joints, cafés, bars, Kentucky Fried Chicken Parlours, McDonald’s, Donut Shops, Body Shops, which were run by multinationals multiplied. The author gives a long list of hotels and restaurants in order to show that they are “contact zones” where the guests and the hosts assemble. It is in these zones the cultural exchanges take place. These look-alike restaurants and burger joints and others everywhere in Asia are more startling and eloquent sites to the author because they symbolise that the world is one. They signal the emergence of tomorrow’s “generic world”.

The global, hybrid dishes in different combinations served up by the restaurants excited the author because it reflected to him the very new order of the postmodern
world. They announce the fact that the whole world has gone ‘global’, ‘glocal’ and hybrid. Hence, one can have access to many worlds at home. He takes note of the slogans, signs, images, languages, music, songs, arts, rituals, menus and cuisines, and treats them as cultural materials which influence those who are at the contact zones. He makes a mention of peoples’ fashions and lifestyles because he thinks of society as “flow” and culture as “flowing” (Ulf Hannerz 4). He maps the transition and records the contacts and cultural mixtures. Transformation and newness come, as Rushdie says, “of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs ... , a bit of this and a bit of that ...” (Imaginary Homelands 394). This is how a new global order has entered the world.

The author was elated to notice that East and West have met and become acquainted. Their interactions, “mating dances” and mixings interested him (VNIK 170). The interchange of customs and cultures among the Westerners and Easterners resulted in mutual assimilation and acculturation. They both got accustomed to the new condition. This conscious assimilation and acculturation was excitement to Iyer. Their unrestricted adaptability to contemporary needs excited the writer. Their familiarity with things Western and Eastern delighted him. As Gothe pointed out, East and West could not be separated.

The author is alive to the benefits of travel. That is why he observes how peoples travel. Each culture he encountered had a great impact on him. Every place he visited acted unpredictably on him. The new situations offered him an opportunity to put his
formulations and assumptions to test. He experienced a flexible sense of self throughout his journey. He lived like a native in the countries he stayed. In Thailand, even though he is a teetotaller, he says, he spend many evenings in bars. In Tibet, though he is not a Buddhist, he climbed up the hilltop monasteries to attend their prayers. In Japan, he chose to live in the temples to learn Zen Buddhism. In Cuba, he removed his shirt to look like a Cuban. Travel elevated him to feel the democracy of the self and he came back realising his soul.

The East’s Buddhism offered him spiritual nourishment and peace of mind. Tibet’s hybrid mix of Hinduism and Buddhism was revelation to him. Like him, he saw many American would-be monks in Kyoto temples. The author could be a friend to many locals and cherishes those treasured moments of bonhomie. Travellers have contributed a lot for the development of the places. They supported the locals to see their dreams come true. Sachiko San, the author’s partner in Japan, could be quoted as a strong example. The author was so happy to see her elevating herself as a tour-conductor for arranging tours around the world. Iyer inspired her initial interest and supported her to assume Western assertiveness and freedom that she dreamt of. He experienced that modern travel can abate the sense of otherness and alienation.

Pico Iyer started his journey in Asia to discover the “Westernised Orient” but what he could witness was the “Orientalized West” as he got ready to return to the West (Brunton 58). He came to a conclusion that the West could not transform the East fully. Every country wanted to copy the West and took what they wanted only.
What he noted was, to borrow his words, “that the East was increasingly moving in on the West” and it was around them (VNIK 358). The Western countries looked to the East not only for “Oriental Wisdom” but also for its material prosperity and technology. The writer felt that the twenty-first century would definitely be the Asian century. He acknowledges that Asia is conquering the West. The author highlights the East-West relations and he celebrates its hybrid cultures. If they reach everywhere global cultural uniformity would be the final outcome. The look-alike nation-states everywhere gave him a sudden revelation that the universe is unified into one single place and the modern man is living in a transnational village.