

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

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Travel writing or travel literature has obtained new heights in the recent times. The popularity of the genre has attracted much critical attention too. William Dalrymple was just twenty two when he came out with his debut work *In Xanadu* and from his very first book; he adopted the genre of travel writing. In the preparation and planning of the book, he clearly mentions his objectives behind his selection. Right since then, he has been a consistent and prolific writer. He applies his creative bent on writing travel books and later also wrote narrative histories. His narrative histories and travel books have overlapping themes, which he himself asserts that while researching on his second book, *City of Djinnns*, he came across the Mughal Legacy and the then British Officials' irresistible attraction for it. This cultivated an idea of the book *White Mughal* and after that came the story *Last Mughal*, and latest one is *A Return of a King* in which he has presented his researched history on the last war between the British army and the Afghan troops. He invests his sincere efforts in the collection of the material of the books and sometimes risks his life too in the perusal of the first hand resources. This study through its close examination of Dalrymple's travel books evaluates the merits of the author at the composition of the genre and his contribution in popularizing it and to bring forth to the world at large through the media of his books certain unexplored and raging discourses, traditions and the buried legacies which in the course of time lost sight of or are declining in the force of new development.

In all the books studied, William Dalrymple has carefully interwoven his personal reflections, memoirs, historical facts which he collects through his toiling through different Archives, personal or Institutional libraries, interviews of the natives who command the authority in the area of knowledge of the topics/issues under focus, references to the earlier travel accounts along with his journey and encounters with the local people and culture. He constitutes a very jovial and free narrative with sparkles of humour and informative cubes. Close perusal of the texts gives us an idea that William Dalrymple has carefully developed his persona in the narrative who is the centre or the hero of his narrative. In his doctoral thesis Dorgello has clearly

observed that, “There are up to three Dalrymple figures involved in each text: the central, autobiographical character, the narrator, and finally the author / public figure. In conversation with Tim Youngs, Dalrymple firmly states: “I never consciously created a persona around the ‘I’. The ‘I’, I suppose, is the me of that particular moment, and how I see things at that particular moment” (40). Dalrymple’s denial of the use of fictional elements in the construction of the iterations of the character of William glosses any changes in the ways in which William is represented (within individual texts, or, particularly, across Dalrymple’s body of work) as accurate reflections of Dalrymple’s intellectual and emotional development. Such a disingenuous approach necessarily privileges the centrality of the authorial figure, and relies upon the (inherently personal) authority of autobiography for its legitimacy”. [Dorgello Thesis] Moreover, the narrative constitutes the chronicle of William’s observations on the countries and people encountered, and the discomforts and hardships he and his companions face in the act of travel.

The narrative tone always remains to be that of the superior Western trope, despite his conscious mentions in various interviews and public talks to maintain neutrality and confessions to be in love with the Indian soil and the desire to be borne here in India if granted five more lives. The treasures of material which can be coined and transformed into the bestselling books can have made him to wish to be borne here, but all the same he seems and is truly writing for Home. Dorgello nicely points out this point,

...his texts can be read as belated echoes or iterations of prior colonial relationships and representations. Essentially, Dalrymple’s texts portray a privileged, British protagonist who travels to and writes about India (and occasionally other destinations). Not only does an anachronistically characterised William repeat the traditional colonial journey from imperial metropole to colonial outpost, but Dalrymple compounds this connection by making British India (rather than India itself) his chief subject. This double connection with Britain’s imperial presence in India means that the ways in which the British-Indian relationship is represented is all the more significant. (Dorgello Thesis)

The instances he uses to drive his point home or the projection of parallels all, all through his books; go in direction of western sympathy. The sights which arrest his attention or the major topics he picked up for his more journalistic travel accounts of *The Age of Kali*, seem to emboss a pattern that he works with the designs to expose the vulnerable issues of the Indian civilization which was staggering to raise itself to

the global equality levels especially during the late nineties. Dalrymple received severe and bitter reactions within Indian circles but somehow through his constant perusal of various issues, consistent production of books and their promotional campaigns, presence at the public events like various Literary Festivals, and carefully manipulated marketing strategies, he has obtained a groomed status, influence and managed to emerge as the expert and authority of the south Asian affairs, histories and socio-political issues. The major debate which Dalrymple raises within or outside his texts is that of the pendulum of power grid which oscillated on the Indian horizons between the colonizers and the colonized. The research and the fact finding exercise benefits him on the double fronts. As it being the favourite subject in the West helps him magnet attention of the western literary-socio-political high powers and at the same time within India too, works out the colonial obsessions and hangovers. Still, to his merits rests his constant perusal of the various socio-political issues, his sincerity, capacity and willingness to go to any extent to collect firsthand experience and resources which impart gravity to his works and take them to the top of the popularity columns. As a traveler he uses his guts to enter any terrain where any ordinary home-dweller or foreigner could not access. The stories thus collected create a sort of attraction and the point of perusal for the readers at home or of foreign land.

The narrative, as the genre itself demands, remains light vein, free and jovial. Dalrymple stuffs humour as the text develops. His first book, *In Xanadu* displays much light veined humourous account, in which the protagonist remains to be butt of innocence in the company of the two female companions at first Laura and then in the later part his ex-girlfriend, Louisa. In the second book, *The City of Djinnns*, too, there are sparkles of humour spread all through the text. Much of it is found at the place of his first settlement at Delhi, at the landlady, Mrs. Puri's household. The elderly and old landlord Mr.Puri's amorous approaches to his wife, Olivia; William puts it in the light vein: "*During our first month in the flat, however, Mr. Puri was on his best behavior. Apart from twice proposing marriage to my wife, he behaved with perfect decorum.*"(*City of Djinnns* 13) The Landlady's strictness of conduct in the day-today household activities and the housemaid or the cook all these things and characters are presented in the humourous colourings. Moreover, his major companion, the taxi-driver, Balvinder Singh's enthusiasm to speak English and his habitual drinking and driving eccentrics, his generalization for the English in connection to their sexual habits, all this sorts of things contribute to the generation of mirth. The later works do not display much such humourous stuffing, and it can be taken as his growing maturity and more command on the narrative techniques. He himself talks about this

point in detail to Tim Youngs in his interview with him “The fact is that it (*In Xanadu*) has got the best jokes and is a much funnier book than the others. I think I have got progressively more politically correct and dull as I get middle aged. But in readings *In Xanadu* will get a louder laugh than anything” (Interview with Tim Youngs 40). Just as he himself mentions, his later works do not raise much of the jovial spirits. On the contrary, *From the Holy Mountains* treats the serious subject of devastation, destruction and demise of Christianity from the regions of Middle East. The narrative documents the extinction and the miserable plight of the eastern Christians in the very land where the Christianity originally blossomed. *The Age of Kali* too is the representation of the beggar plights of the Indian continent on the grounds of Socio-Political issues. The last book, *Nine lives*, as its sub title suggests, is the search of sacred in modern India, still another serious subject and more serious stuff to be discussed and brought under scrutiny, and so does not leave any room for free jovial cutting of jokes. Still, the narrative sways in a manner that despite the serious themes or the issues; the overall temperament finds an easy and conversational tone.

Major travel texts adopt the scheme of taking a key event, text or any specific route around which the entire account develops. Sometimes, the writer picks up major happenings on his travelling experiences and narrates with his creative bent. William Dalrymple’s all the books even including his History Narratives, have a clear foundation. His first book, *In Xanadu* is framed upon the famous silk route following the footsteps of Marco Polo, i.e. from Jerusalem to Shang tu in China- popular in the West as 'Xanadu'. The book presents William’s journey from Jerusalem to Chinese Shang tu in the company of two companions; first of Laura and then, Louisa. The journey vividly documents the hardships, dangers, toils and dare devil tricks taken by the traveler on the course of the journey. Dalrymple, along with his constant compare and contrast of the present landscape with that of at the time of Marco Polo as it has been reported by Polo in his *Travels*, also presents elaborate ethnographic details along with detailed commentary on the issues of cultural or conventional continuations of the regions he visits. Mostly he prefers to stay with the family of the locals, instead of in the hotels, thus, picking up an opportunity to observe their life from the close quarters. At places, he brings forth the historical details and mythical stories too to describe the entire scenario of the place. His second book *The City of Djinnns* is a quite different, and can be taken as the dwelling account rather than on the move. It along with presenting Dalrymple’s justifications for; and initial exercises of settling down in Delhi, delineates his quest of the Historic Developments of this city.

Delhi, perhaps, might be the only city in the world which witnessed so many destructions and devastations either natural or manmade. After each of the devastations the city breathed its rebirth and resurgence with new enthusiasm and vigour. William Dalrymple erects the foundation of the book on the very facts as he has been informed by Pir Sadr-ud-Din:

When I met Pir Sadr-ud-Din, that I learned the secret that kept the city returning to new life. 'Delhi', said Pir Sadr-ud-Din, 'was **a city of djinns**. Though it had been burned by invaders time and time again, millennium after millennium, still the city was rebuilt; each time it rose like a phoenix from the fire. Just as the Hindus believe that a body will be reincarnated over and over again until it becomes perfect, so it seemed Delhi was destined to appear in a new incarnation century after century. The reason for this, said Sadr-ud-din, was that the djinns loved Delhi so much they could never bear to see it empty or deserted' ... (Dalrymple *City of Djinns* 9)

He investigates the traces of all the cities right from the Lutyen's to the mythical Indraprasth of Mahabharata. In the course of the book, he also presents the post-partition and post Indira Gandhi murder riots. He mixes with and spends time with group of the Eunuchs, whose reference he found as the care takers of the Mughal Zenanas.

The third book, *From the Holy Mountain*, again takes the set route, earlier traversed by the famous traveler. Here in this book he wanders in the Byzantine world where the great saint and scholar John Moschos had journeyed in the company of his disciple Sophronius, the sophist. John Moschos's *The Spiritual Meadows* provides the prime inspiration to William Dalrymple to explore the parts of the Middle East and he tries to have the glimpses of John Moschos's world of Byzantium. Thus, Moschos's *The Spiritual Meadows* gives him the thrust of traveling this world, William himself notes:

.... *The Spiritual Meadows* of John Moschos, the unlikely little book which first brought me to this monastery, and the original manuscript of which I saw for the first time less than one hour ago. God willing, John Moschos will lead me on, eastward to Constantinople and Anatolia, then southwards to the Nile and thence, if it is still possible, to the great Khangra Oasis, once the southern frontier of Byzantium. (*From the Holy Mountain* 4)

The book voices the concern on the lost glory of Christianity and seems an attempt to analyse the root causes operating behind such drastic transitions. Not only this, Dalrymple also presents the plights of the local people and their miseries on the

war stricken scenario, raging all around. One interesting outcome of the wars and constant violence all around the region, as Dalrymple observes, is people's evolving tendencies to go for fun and delights in life and altogether aversion of eyes from any sort of serious art and development or any form of constructive tasks. On getting such clues, he inquires the people and finds them narrating the reason that they felt they were never certain of life even for the next day; and in such uncertainty they felt it better to enjoy the time in their stock without caring and getting engaged in the issues of serious nature.

The Age of Kali, the fourth book of William Dalrymple concentrates its focus on the bloodshed violence spread throughout the subcontinent. He states, he feels convinced that the Age of 'Kali' has in reality cuffed the human race here, and made them thirsty of each other's blood- no matter whatever is the ground. Be it social, political or the religious, or on the grounds of morality, status or family feuds, the human race seems on the dagger drawing stance. Tolerance and broad-mindedness are no longer in the index of human virtues, rather they are considered to be the attributes of weakness in the social arena. Man finds himself entangled with his own fellow people and he feels he has to struggle hard to get what, he thinks, is essential for his well-being and happiness. The weakest points of Democracy have got surfaced and the reins of power have been grabbed by the persons with criminal backgrounds. In this way, the book documents the evils spread through the society and tries to bring forth the scanned facts which hold the alarm signals at the showy pomp and gongs of development and modernization.

Nine Lives picks up the issues of religion and spirituality in India. Here, William Dalrymple investigates the parameters and the extents and extremity level to which the religious conducts make part of human life in the modernistic traces and the streams of development. His captioning of the subtitle '*In search of Sacred in Modern India*' very well glimpses his under currents of thoughts and intentions. The stories he has picked up, his interviews of the specific religious characters, the struggles of these characters in their personal, social, and even at their religious bodies, and his narrative strategy of letting the character be on the front of narration directly in the first person reporting; all this in a way brings forth the varied cultural traditions co-existing in India, but alongside it also pin points the shacking loose of faiths in the existing religious conventions and a sure concern at the bottom to preserve some of them. Here he has picked up the personas of Jainism, Buddhism, major trends of Hinduism, the Sufism and through the study of these specific characters, he brings out several facts regarding them which otherwise would have been inaccessible to the readers at

home or abroad. The protagonists of the different essays are the representatives of caste system existent in Hinduism. The Theyyam dancer proudly and for more than once in the essay reports that during the Theyyam seasons even the high cadre Brahmins too would touch his feet and come seeking his blessings. The majority of the Bauls in Bengal are from the lower strata of society. The daughters of Yellamma, the Devadasis are from the lower caste families, and the singers of Epic are the members of nomadic families. In each essay, Dalrymple first reaches up to the specific character he has intended to meet in order to collect information about the specific creed or cult. Then he, after some propagating detailing and initial queries, slides in the side and lets the character narrate the entire issue from his/her points of views. This strategy works nicely in favour of the author, one as he is the outsider and the issues/characters under discussion involve religious matter so it saves him from getting dragged into any controversy. Secondly, the material presented seems much authentic.

Travel books, in major cases, present the detailed descriptions of the sights and the places and even the transportations and the roads taken are also find their way in the narration. The writer views the place as the outsider and the things, locations and everything that is different or located in different backgrounds capture his attentions. His creative process incorporates such differences in the narrative. The intensity or the lengths of details may vary in different travel writers i.e. some travel writers would go for the detailed description of the travel process, the places visited and the people encountered whereas some others would just draw outlines of the journey and develop the narrative on more somber issues and the internal process that is taking shape in their mind rather than detailing the physical part of the journey. Dalrymple incorporates details of the journey, gives fair account of the places he visits and the people he encounters. He has got an extraordinary talent in creating a live image of the place or person just with a line or two. He also takes enough time to detail the journey and the transportations especially in *In Xanadu* and in *From the Holy Mountains*. The other three books namely; *City of Djinnns*, *The Age of Kali*, and *Nine Lives*, concentrate more on the places and people and the cultural detailing rather than on the journeying on the road.

In the very initial phase of the journey in *In Xanadu*, at the time of preparations for departure, anticipating the nature of the travel, William notes:

Thus I committed myself to travelling across twelve thousand miles of extremely dangerous, inhospitable territory, much of which seemed still to be closed to the foreigners, with two companions, one a complete stranger, the other completely estranged. (*In Xanadu* 13-14)

Along with the descriptions of the sights and places, his reflections too generate gravity in the narration. Arriving at the holy city of Jerusalem, he points out:

For two thousand years Jerusalem has brought out the least attractive qualities in every race that has lived there. The Holy City has had more atrocities committed in it, more consistently, than any other town in the world. Sacred to three religions, the city has witnessed the worst intolerance and self-righteousness of all of them. (*In Xanadu* 18)

At some places William presents his imaginations from the historical clues how the place would have been bustling with activities during that time and close to it also presents how it appears to him at present. Describing the *han* close to the sea port at Acre, William writes:

During the months of the *passagium*, between Easter and late autumn, the *han* would have been full of sea captains, merchants and sailors. Here they would wake and sleep, eat and drink, buy and sell, free from the laws and customs of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. It is a quite place now. You enter the compound under a narrow arch of red and white polychrome keystones, past a pair of old metal-reinforced gates still hanging from their original rusty hinges. (*In Xanadu* 23)

The people are also described with picking their peculiarities. On their way to the Armenia Capital of Sis, heading towards the citadel of Sis, after a walk of a mile or two, he and Laura take a lift of a tractor full of local people. Here goes the description:

Inside was a vast earth-mother swathed in voluminous wraps of calico and taffeta. Beside her was a small boy, presumably her son. She clucked around him like an old broody hen, wiping his nose and removing hey from his hair. She said nothing, but blenched occasionally and fed herself noisily from a nose-bag. Good looks have been shared out unevenly among the Turks. Their men are almost all handsome with dark, supple skin and strong features: good bones, sharp eyes and tall, masculine bodies. But the women share their menfolk's pronounced features in a most unflattering way. Very few are beautiful. Their noses are too large, their chins too prominent. Baggy wraps conceal pneumatic bodies. Here must lie the reason for the Turks' easy drift

out of heterosexuality. (Dalrymple *In Xanadu* 71)

In the '*City of Djinnns*', William presents the travels in dwellings. His stay in Delhi and his excavation of the different layers of history is replete with the descriptions of monumental sights, different alleys of the city which bear historic importance, gardens sites, streets, and people who bear authority in connection with the city's history or keep the lineage of historic and representative art alive. Along with these monumental and historic descriptions, William also provides the clues of the present day scenario and the beating life in the city of Delhi:

The damburst of western goods and ideas that were now pouring into India had brought with them an undertow of western morality. Adulterous couples now filled the public gardens; condom advertisements dominated the Delhi skyline. The Indian capital, once the last bastion of the chaperoned virgin, the double-locked bedroom and the arranged marriage, was slowly filling with lovers: whispering, blushing, occasionally holding hands, they loitered beneath flowering trees like figures from a miniature. Delhi was starting to unbutton. After the long Victorian twilight, the sari was beginning to slip. (*City of Djinnns* 24)

The study and interest in both the major religions of India, namely Hindu and Islam; William comes to the level of drawing line between them, their apparent differences and preferences. In '*City of Djinnns*' he presents his observations in regards of the both:

Hindus revere nature but never feel any need to marshal or mould it into a design of their own: a Banyan tree will almost be encouraged to spread its drooping creepers into the middle of any village market, or to block any backwoods track. It is revered for itself; however it develops, that end is regarded as a sort of perfection. As in nature, so in architecture: Hindu palaces seem to grow organically of their own will: a hall here, a shrine there, a sudden inexplicable curve in the curtain wall somewhere else.

The Muslim tradition is quite different. Inheriting the Greek love of order and logic, Islamic gardens—like their buildings – are regimented into lines of perfect symmetry; balance and design is all; nothing is left to impulse or chance. With these qualities, the Mughal gardens dotted around the subcontinent are as alien to the Indian environment as the Brighton Pavilion is to the English south coast, or the Chinese Pagoda to Kew. Outside the garden,

all is delightful chaos; inside, reflecting the central concept of Islam, spontaneity is crushed by submission to a higher order". (*City of Djinnns* 235)

In the process of ransacking the city with the gauge of historic significance, William consults certain people too who bear the authoritative knowledge and information about the city's gorgeous past. One such person is Dr. Yunus Jaffery whose ancestors were Persian tutors at the Red Fort. William went to meet him on a rainy afternoon:

The door opened to reveal a gaunt, clean-shaven man. He wore white Mughal pyjamas whose trouser-bottoms, wide and slightly flared, were cut in the style once favoured by eighteen-century Delhi gallants. On his head he sported a thin white mosque-cap. Heavy black glasses perched on the bridge of his nose, but the effect was not severe. (*City of Djinnns* 186)

The Age of Kali too is full of lively descriptions of people, places, traditions and conventions and the oddities and abnormalities that arrest William's attention while his stay in India. The main focus of the book is on the issues that Dalrymple finds to be followed in detail and they are from Northern part of India to Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Goa, and the territories on the Indian Ocean too. What captures Dalrymple's attention are the grounds gravely fixed on the stark reality of commonplace life. He describes how caste, crime, money and muscle power have a stranglehold on rural north Indian society, particularly Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan where women are raped, and caste based militias kill each other with impunity. The agencies of administration and police are often in collusion with the criminals. He also tries to understand the leagues of the convicted murderers to win the elections, the student unions' fascination for the power game of politics for that their use of guns and grenades when actually books and journals should be their concerns. On the whole, it is all about what William comes across during his travels across the Indian subcontinent. Some places he visits, particularly the camps of Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and the borders of Pakistan, demand great cautions and hold a bit of personal risk too. For these are the places where fatal- deadly weapons trade free and even the local outsider is not easily well-come within their staunch secretive circles and is looked at with sheer suspicion, and the slightest blur of untrustworthiness from such an outsider might be justified with a shot of a gun.

Like '*The Age of Kali*'. '*Nine Lives*' too focuses on the various issues or persons, but unlike it, here the focus remains fixedly concentrated on the spiritual and religious orbit of the life of the ordinary persons. Each essay describes different

person belonging to different religious background. What fires his imagination for this book is the very basic questions which he himself puts forward in the introduction of the book:

What does it actually mean to be a holy man or a Jain nun, a mystic or a tantric seeking salvation on the roads of modern India, as the Tata trucks thunder past? Why does one individual embrace armed resistance as a sacred calling, while another devoutly practices ahimsa, or non-violence? Why does one think he can create a god, while another thinks that god can inhabit him? How is each specific religious path surviving the changes India is currently undergoing? What changes and what remains the same? Does India still offer any sort of real spiritual alternative to materialism, or is it now just another fast developing satrap of the wider capitalist world? (*Nine Lives* Xiii)

The book remains rich with the lively descriptions of the persons. Carl Thompson in his book *Travel Writing* observes that:

From the late eighteenth century Travel Writing starts to look inwards as well as outwards. At the same time, however, this new concern with the traveling self could be pursued in several different ways, and it has since the eighteenth century encompassed a variety of styles and techniques for writing about the self. For example, the extent to which travel writers articulate their inner world of thought and feeling can vary considerably. In many travelogues, this inward scrutiny and subsequent self-expression does not go much further than a simple declaration of what the traveler thought and felt at various junctures.....in more extreme forms, however, this inward gaze may become an attempt to chart the flux of consciousness in the course of travel. (Thompson *Travel Writing* 111)

In his travel writing, William Dalrymple too presents the journey within. He looks inwards and presents sometimes the entire flux of thought process though not in the stream of conscious vein; his majority of concerns go regarding the travel or covering the distance to the next destination or sometimes more on his reflection with the historical facts and the present day plights of the place he visits. In his first book, '*In Xanadu*', his majority of conversations with 'self' focuses on the next destination and in bringing out the historical facts or in the excavating the details presented in the '*Travels*' of Marco Polo and comparing them with the present day scenario, and thereby extending his own concerns for the things deteriorating. At one place, he narrates his dream, which he sees while sleeping. It was about his aching front teeth which he dreams Laura, in the form of the dentist tries to cure with pliers in hand, and

in the mean while he gets up from the dream very shivering. The dream and the troubles in it signify the uncertainty that prevails on their being able to reach to their destination and the exhausting hardships in the transit they have been facing. And here comes the quotable quote of the traveler which only a traveler with his personal felt sentiments could term it: "There are moments in all long journeys when the whole business of travelling seems utterly futile. One feels homesick, tired and above all bored. Nothing pleases. Everything palls" (Dalrymple. *In Xanadu* 220). Sometimes, William comes to state the bare feelings that descend to his mind as per the situation: in the Epilogue of *In Xanadu*, recording his feelings just after the success of his mission he writes, "I had never understood Burton's feelings until I left Xanadu. Within the hour, the euphoria of having reached our goal and delivered the oil began to wear off" (Dalrymple *In Xanadu* 301).

City of Djinnns encompasses author's initial phase of settlement in the city of Delhi along with the creative exercise of this book itself, thus, it makes us confront many passages which narrate the mind of the author himself. He remains extremely busy with his project, perturbed by the hot weather of the city. He visits several sights either alone or in the company either of his wife, Olivia or Balvinder Singh, the taxi driver. He shows all the signs that he is in love with the city. He presents his mantle state very often and clearly when he feels it best to:

To best appreciate New Delhi I used to walk to it from the Old City. Leaving behind the press and confusion of Shahjehanabad ---- the noise and the heat, the rickshaws and the barrow-boys, the incense and the sewer stink--- I would find myself suddenly in a gridiron of wide avenues and open boulevards, a scheme as ordered and inevitable as a Bach fugue. Suddenly the roads would empty and the air clean. There was no dust, no heat: all was shaded, green and cool. (Dalrymple *City of Djinnns* 81)

The narrative of '*From the Holy Mountain*' showcases many instances of William's introspective passages. As he witnesses the nightmarish plight of the eastern Christians, and collects their painful stories of atrocities, his conscious experiences great pains that somehow peep in the narration too. At the grave of Moschos, he is solely internalized and as if communicating with only his own 'self', he presents the strain:

I stood before the grave of John Moschos, the man whose writings had brought me on this journey, and in whose footsteps I was travelling. On the top of the slab rested a modern icon of the man, shown old and grey with a scroll in one hand and a quill in the other. So I thought, this was where he

started off, and where, after all his travels through the width and breadth of Byzantine Levante, he ended up.

Prompted by the example of the nun, despite having half dropped the habit, I began to pray there, and the prayers came with surprising ease. I prayed for the people who had helped me on the journey, the monks who had showed me the manuscript on Mount Ethos, the frightened Suriani of Mar Gabriel, the Armenians of Aleppo and the Palestinian Christians in the camp of Mar Elias. And then I did what I suppose I had come to do: I sought the blessing of John Moschos for the rest of the trip, and particularly asked for his protection in the badlands of Upper Egypt, the most dangerous part of the journey. (Dalrymple *From the Holy Mountain* 287)

In his last two books, viz. *'The Age of Kali'*, and *'Nine Lives: In Search of Sacred in Modern India'*, William Dalrymple has adopted an entirely different scheme of narration. Here, he presents the accounts not on his own but they are highly person or situation based. So the narration concentrates more around the person or place under discussion. This sort of narration allows him to present the things from the local view points, keeping the causes and effect principle in the balance of the local elements. He just remains a platform provider from where the local place or person gets its/his voice amplified through the medium of his book. Thus, though the entire scheme seems objective, still, in the selection of the issues, person and places, his personality operates well nigh. Sometimes it seems he tries to pick up the negative stuffs and through attempts to show these countries their place on the index of Development. On the whole, the entire trope of writing represents a carefully staged presentation of the author's narrative persona.

As Carl Thompson has pointed out that in many cases the travel writer's self fashioning also often proceeds by a logic of differentiation, whereby the 'Other' is constructed in some subtle or unsubtle way principally as a foil or counterpoint to the supposedly heroic, civilized and/or cultured protagonist. In the writings of William Dalrymple this sort of scheme also remains fully at work. William at every chance picks up an opportunity to project his superiority over the inferior, uncivilized locals and their lack of sophistication in the simple life business in almost all the books. In the Chinese territory, in *'In Xanadu'*, he presents the matter of cleaning of nose in a very sarcastic manner:

Particularly unpleasant was the aggressive old man with whom we shared our coal slag. Our relationship got off to a bad start on the first day when during a mid-morning *chai* shop, I blew my nose in his presence. For this unforgivable

faux pas I earned myself a violent torrent of abuse. It appears that my crime was twofold: firstly blowing my nose while he was drinking, secondly using a handkerchief. Apparently polite Uigur etiquette demands that one walks away from any imbibing company, raises one's left hand to the ridge of one's nose and blows heartily through the nostrils, aiming to discharge the deposit onto the ground. Any overhang should then be wiped away, and the hand then cleaned on the shirt front. (Dalrymple *In Xanadu* 273)

The book abounds in many such examples. In '*City of Djinnns*' too, William's superior self finds amplification at every chance or opportunity. To cite an example from it: to his queries regarding the festival of Diwali, Mrs. Puri explains to William that all the lighting and firing crackers were not just burning of money but rather it is about accumulating it.

"Diwali is the festival of Laxmi, the goddess of Wealth", explained Mrs. Puri, "If we light candles and leave our front doors open, on this night Laxmi will come into our house and count all our moneys."

"Why does she do that? I asked, intrigued by the idea of Laxmi parking her lotus outside the gate and paying a visit in her avatar as divine auditor." (Dalrymple *City of Djinnns* 93)

Behind the compositions and motives of '*The Age of Kali*', and '*Nine Lives*', there seem the exercise of sounding the trumpets of western superiority. The issues he has picked up in *The Age of Kali* are all the mid-nineties issues which India encountered with the duel storming at the socio-political domains; on one hand went the government policy of liberalization and thereby the direct effects of foreign investments in the Indian markets. Though it had some positive effects on the financial horizons yet, it acted as a trauma to the centuries' long superior self image of the Indian culture. Secondly, in the new wave of influence that took the society under its umbrella was that of Television. The society and especially the middle class came under its strong hold which took the westernized way of life as a parameter of modernity and advancement. The financial flow increased the purchasing power of the middleclass which fairly invested in buying the luxurious amenities and the average household got television sets, telephones and two-wheelers. This transformation brought certain social evils too. The increased standards of life increased the competitions too. The political scenario also underwent transformations. The voters started demanding their 'cost' for casting votes in the favour of any certain political group. As elections went costly, the degree of political scams too increased. And in this way the entire social institution kept losing ethical dignity. Being the

outsider these issues arrest William Dalrymple's attention and he presents the journalistic stuff around them with a special captioning that though the matters bear grave seriousness they pass as simple routine news articles in the Indian society. In case of *'Nine Lives'* too, the sub title: *'In search of Sacred in Modern India'*; pin points the author's motives of undertaking exercise of locating the status of religion and spirituality which has acted as the signature identity of Indian culture, especially in Modern Indian society. The author marks it with the audible emphasis that in the fast and furious flow of modernity in the Indian society, somewhere the ideological spirituality and the devotional avenues are eroded. The new generation is deviating from the long cults of conventional lineages and looking forward to some new forms of careers. This tendency of the younger generations mounts a sure pressure on the older generations who feel it their moral responsibility to keep the strain alive and flowing. The concerns of Srikanda, the idol maker, represent the worries of the entire lot of the elderly generation: "I don't know", said Srikanda, shrugging his shoulders. "It's all part of the world opening up. After all, as my son says, this is the age of computers. And as much as I might want otherwise, I can hardly tell him this is the age of bronze caster" (Dalrymple *Nine Lives* 204) [Perhaps here William derives the pleasure in showing the West defeating the East.]

Another strategy most travel writers resort to is that of presenting themselves superior to the other travelers whom they happen to pass by on their routes and transits accidentally or by chance. William Dalrymple in his initial books makes use of this strategy and uses the travelers of other countries in contrast to his own activities. In his first book, *'In Xanadu'*, when at the hotel Seljuk happens to encounter some German cyclists doing press-ups in front of his room. Here he aims to show that their intentions were intellectual whereas the Germans journeyed on the physical measures and were least interested in the intellectual pursuits. Again on the bus when they happen to meet a Japanese tourist, he makes fun of him referring to his name; Condom. Even in the Chinese Keriya the party of German geomorphologists is also described with a sort of ridicule and comic vein. One of the Germans' attempts to talk to Louisa as a gesture to make a better acquaintance with her is also presented in a lighter vein: "German: My father was in semi-conductors. I too vood have gone into semi-conductors, had I not discovered moraines" (Dalrymple *In Xanadu* 267).

In *From the Holy Mountain*, he presents the ancient travellers' irresponsible conducts in contrast to his own sincerity of purpose: The English traveller the Hon. Robert Curzon is still considered one of the worst offenders: after a quick circuit around the monastic libraries of Athos in the late 1840s (in the company, I am

ashamed to say, of my great-great-uncle), Curzon left the Holy Mountain with his trunks bulging with illuminated manuscripts and Byzantine *chrysobuls* (Pp.9 From the Holy Mountain). Further, Dalrymple refers the celebrated Travel Writer Colin Thubron and his witnessing miracle and tries to erect a parallel to him by his own experiences:

When the travel writer Colin Thubron visited the convent in 1966, he claimed to have witnessed a miracle: to have seen the face of the icon of Notre Dame de Seidnaya stream with tears. In the same church I too witnessed a miracle, or something that today would certainly be regarded as a miracle in almost any other country in the Middle East. For the congregation seemed to consist not of Christians but almost entirely of heavily bearded Muslim men. (Dalrymple *From the Holy Mountain* 187)

The travel writers travel with the set motive of documenting their trip, they certainly keep and maintain log of their travels and keep on maintaining the records of journey along with the original travels. Afterwards, at home they once again fare the journey in their memory and enact it again in order to write it – an entire course of a creative process takes place with all the tactics of selection, addition, and omission of facts and invented issues. William Dalrymple, in the first book, gives us clear clues of maintaining and scribbling through his log book, but in the later works does not find it necessary to report about it. He plans his narrative in strategic modes. He would not just visit the place but would collect all the tit-bits of the place, and at the time of composition, he also presents views presented for the place by the previous travelers. He would also investigate the myths or any other popular or historic accounts or local beliefs around the particular place. Wherever necessary he places a short story of mythical stories about the place and thus keeps the narration replete with various interests worthy materials and saves it being monotonous, dull and drab with only the place descriptions. His library research enriches the work with knowledge cubes which otherwise would not have been accumulated by the readers. In course of the first book *In Xanadu*, he presents accounts of the three Magi, and presents the whole version of the story and examines its probable origin and suggests still there is an avid need of close perusal. He also talks in detail about the Assassins' group and their mechanics of terror. When in Lahore, he comes to visit Jahangir's tomb, he opens the whole chapter of Tom Coryat's travels and his descriptions of the places. In the hotel in the Mansehra, he presents the weird stories about the local tribes and soon after that he presents the details of the Maurya emperor Ashok whose stone carved edicts he visits. The whole narration remains pulsating with this sort of strains of stories. In the

City of Djinnns, he presents many such stories right from the presenting the individual tragedy of the Sikh family in the post-Indira murder riots, partition stories as well as the historic accounts of Shahjehan and his sons, and the detailed version of Muhammad Tughlaq's Delhi to Dolatabad episode, the myth of Khwaja Khizr and many. In *From the Holy Mountains*, he presents many mythical and historical accounts related to the places he visits like the story of Abraham's Fish pond in Urfa and the stories of the Byzantine saints. *The Age of Kali* and *Nine Lives* constitute themselves of the detailed accounts. In previous books the accounts or the stories came as the fillers or occurred in between the travel places, but in the later two books the description of process of journey goes silent and only the peculiar stories that arrest the writer's attention form the major part of the narrative.

In his conversation with Tabish Khair, William Dalrymple himself comments and clarifies his own stance and transformation of his own schemes of travel texts:

What I think is in all my books is a sense of place and a sense of history. In some the history predominates, in others the place takes the lead. But any fascination I had with the business of travel itself – walking, catching buses and trains, and getting from a to b – was pretty well exhausted after *In Xanadu*. Since then I have been using the form to write either about the place – trying to catch the essence of Delhi in *City of Djinnns* for example; or about an issue – the demise of the Middle Eastern Christians in *From the Holy Mountain*. *Nine Lives* is in some ways deliberately the opposite of the sort of narrator-led travel narrative like *In Xanadu*: here the narrator is almost absent, there is no description of travel, no continuous narrative, and I suppose it is as much a work of journalism or anthropology or spirituality as a travel book; and yet it is in some ways very much a classic travel book: the individual setting off with a notebook and set of questions and writing it up when he gets home. (Dalrymple *Interview with Tabish Khair* 176)

On the whole the study of William Dalrymple's travel books at least brings to the fore that the author is sincere with his efforts and pursuits of the issues. When being asked by Tabish Khair about his views of looking at the things and issues of the 'Orient' being a 'Westerner', Dalrymple nicely opposed the point by asserting that

I write about the world I live in, and write it as I see it, and encounter it. Generations of my family have lived and died in India, I have Bengali blood swirling in my veins, I've lived here for quarter of a century and I think of it as home. I will never be an Indian, but like many people in the globalised world, I am both insider and outsider: who today spends their lives in the village

where they are born? To have that dualism is I think a pretty useful complexity for a writer, not an obstacle. (Dalrymple *Interview with Tabish Khair* 180)

In the same interview, William Dalrymple quotes the words of Colin Thubron whom he labels as the most revered Travel writer of 80s and who is still at work:

The sympathetic traveler who takes time to immerse himself in a country may gain not only factual knowledge but also a sensuous and emotional understanding, and convey a people's psychology and their response to things in a way that can never be accessed studying in a library. A good travel writer can give you the wrap and weft of everyday life, the generalities of people's existence that are rarely reflected in academic writing or journalism, and hardly touched upon by any other discipline. Despite the internet and revolution in communications, there is still no substitute for a good piece of travel writing. (Dalrymple *Interview with Tabish Khair* 180)

The same is true about William Dalrymple also. He has brought many issues in the discussion. He has also worked meticulously against the faulty generalizations regarding India by some of the western writers and travelers especially in the mid 70s and 80s. The most important privilege he enjoys is that of being insider and outsider at the same time. His works encompass the issues which perhaps would never have got to the attention and under the scholastic discussions, had he not presented them through his well researched and well pursued interests. Moreover, to his expert gaze fall many occult details which he, with his ability to emboss creativity, picks up and weaves them in lively narratives.

Scopes for Advance Research in the Context of Travel Literature

As the Researcher has stated earlier, it is natural that the more one traverses in one subject-area, the more it opens one's insight and one gets clearer visions in that particular discipline of knowledge. Sometimes this clarity of vision allows the person to talk more freely and with easier terminology and better explanatory images about the subject under study which otherwise to other people appears tough, complex or demanding more traits of concentrated efforts. As the Researcher went on studying the History of Travel Writing, which, the Researcher must assert, has been nicely and in a systematic vein preserved and documented in the West. In the eastern territories

of the globe, and especially in the Indian sub-continent, there is no separate discipline of travel writing found, though travel and descriptions of travels are found in almost all literatures of all languages right from Sanskrit to Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, and many more. Whatever Travel Literature is found in India in different languages can be traced as flourished either under direct or indirect influence of Western Travel Writings and its critical principles. The conspicuous difference that the Researcher could strike between the Western and Eastern approach of knowledge is that the Western excel the Eastern in the matters of documentations of the evolved knowledge. The Researcher also noticed the facts that during the time of Renaissance, the explorers were strictly instructed to keep and maintain detailed log of their travels. The oddities or anything that appeared as entirely different from their knowledge system was preserved along with the word descriptions in the forms of sketches. The travel-logs were waited and at home were studied carefully as to keep the track and for the guidance of the next batch of the sea-explorer. In this way it created a corpus of knowledge, which helped society as the stepping support, and any one, as it was open to access to everybody in the forms of book, could take his/her observation to new logical ends. The printing press technology added new feather, and the books framed documents were more convenient. The information, thus, evolved by the reports of journeys gave shape to the Histories and historical accounts. Later, travel and history developed their own independent disciplines. Historically, the travel accounts, then called traveller's accounts, created a greater consciousness among the European societies about the progress and availability of greater resources in the outer world, especially in the eastern part of the globe. The information that travel induced; bred the desire to explore these parts and to take hold of them and this might be considered as one of the contributing factors of the genesis of Imperial- Colonial set ups in the history of human civilization. During the eighteenth century travellers and travel accounts' popularity attracted even many mediocre talents to it. The creative artists fashioned their fictional novels on the grip of travel accounts. The things and the spirits of exploitation and encashment of the form's popularity went to the extent that there generated the doubts on the authenticity of several travel accounts; this led to the consideration of travel accounts as the forms of lesser arts.

When, towards the first half of the twentieth century, most of the colonies got independence as a result of emergence of Nationalism, Education and got conscious of their own Nations cultures and societies as separate and unique entities. There emerged the sense of resentment and contradiction to the representation of their

cultures on mere western scales on the derogatory levels. Thus, the rose of the new 'view' of the worlds once represented by the Eurocentric tones and attitudes; contradicting or presenting the views of the places and societies not as 'others' but as 'ours' which is often identified as 'Post-Colonial' Travel Writing.

With the advent of new millennium, the first half of the twenty-first century witnessed immense development of information technology. This new technology of information access and data-transfer brought the world to the tip of one's fingers with the internet access at 3G or 4G and generations of Smart-phones. The world and the earth's demographic carpet became accessible both physically and with the aids of information technology. This gave rise to a new debate that since now there is no unknown world, there are no unexplored worlds (where the ancient travellers went and produced their stuff to the Home Dwellers who were probably never able to access the place 'HE' visited and therefore was the only authority and authentic source of the 'truths' he presented), this will leave no scope for the survival of travel writing. But, the assumptions proved mistaken as there were some popular adventure-packed travel accounts on POLAR regions and the advancements in the space science introduced possibilities in the space travel too.

Against the assumption of travel writing getting stalled with the advancement of information technology, travel writing as a form of non-fiction and based on the REAL experiences acquired new heights of popularity. In the world of novel realms of creative publications i.e. Television and Internet, travel narration took the format of travel documentaries which allowed the new generation of spectators a novel experience of witnessing how the traveller undertakes his/her expedition and encounters with the subjects and situations in the foreign land. On the domain of World Wide Web, traveller Blogs acquires immense popularity with the advantage of its quick reach to the readers the very evening as soon as the traveller returns to his/her hotel or staying place composes the blog and shares it with the readers. Not only this, with their new outlook and novel approaches to the destination places, the new generations of travel writers have transformed the travel writing into a Brand new genre in the category of non-fiction.

In past the faculty of travelling was attributed only to the males; the females were attributed to 'sessility' i.e. being grounded at Home. And this is why, though women were very much present on the travels as wives, mistresses or prostitutes;

there are comparatively less number of (Woman) travel accounts available; and those which are available are in the forms of personal diaries. But now the scenario, outlook and sensibilities have changed. Now there are women explorers who traverse the recesses of the globe and space all alone and not as the accompanying travellers only. They come out with their own accounts not only in the book formats in the forms of documentaries and Blogs too.

Moreover, the history of human civilization is the history of migrations, individual or mass, willing or forced. So there are many scopes of varying view points as to how after generations of getting settled in the foreign land and civilization, an individual from that group happens to visit back to one's country of real origin and how he/she reacts and responds to it i.e. what is known as Diasporic sensibilities of identity crisis or search of the place in the social orbits once left behind by one's forefathers.

Looking to all this facts the Researcher would like to draw attention of the aspiring Researchers to the following topics which deserve full fathomed attention and if followed with keen interests, the end results of them would be a real addition to the existing corpus of knowledge:

(A) The Travels and Travel Writings in India. The researcher can take different language groups and major contributors and the patterns of their destination selection, motives behind the travel and their historical significance in the making of modern India. (e.g. Gandhi's travels, Vivekanand's travels and their reflections on their travelling in the different regions of India in their speeches letters, etc.)

(B) The researcher can also work to distinguish, compare and contrast, the real travelogues and the fictional travelogues.

(C) The researcher may also concentrate over the different views and visions adopted by two different travel writers and their narrative styles in the composition of their travel texts.

(D) The researcher may also select some travel texts of the Eastern Travellers on the descriptions of Western Destinations and the pattern of picking up the issues, pointing out the ethnographical, cultural distinctions in their travel

narratives.

(E) The researcher may also take up the task of compare and contrast the attitudes of the different travellers in their respective travel texts.

(F) The Inter-disciplinary studies on Travel texts and Blogs and Travel Documentaries can also be undertaken.

(G) The researcher can also focus on the works of Woman Travel Writers.

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