

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

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*“To wander is to get education.”*

*– Goethe*

Travel is not something new to us. It is a fascinating part of human life. The human history is a history of travel. Man had to travel from place to place either in order to fulfill his basic needs or to retain his existence from time immemorial. Even it won't be an exaggeration to claim that today's modern-developed-world has turned into reality as a result of man's tendencies of traveling.

Travel is one of the indispensable activities of human life. Whether one travels to foreign lands or just across the city, it is a journey, and from the journeying one shapes oneself, history and the stories one tells.

Etymologically, the word **‘Travel’** originated from ‘Travailen’ meaning **‘to make a journey’**. Originally it meant ‘to toil, labour’. Thus, the semantic development may have been via the notion of **‘go on a difficult journey’**. Even there are terms meaning ‘Travel’ in the treasure of English language like: ‘Sojourn’, ‘Tour’, ‘Errand’, ‘Wandering’, ‘Trip’, ‘Movement’, ‘Mobility’, etc. almost all these terms echo the movement from one place to another one.

Traveling expands the circumference of horizons of knowledge and insight of any human being. It not only brings different cultures and cultural heritages closer but also induces understanding and social integrity. In ancient times the apparent purposes behind any travel were either that of religious- i.e. Pilgrimage or that of Trades and Business. But with the advancement of time, the intentions have changed. Now, people travel to understand different cultures, for joy, for change, for reducing stress. Even one travels for literary, political or economic reasons. A tendency to travel for the sake of travel, just to wander without any defined purpose, is also found in some persons. It is noticed that, in the ancient times the ecclesiastical personalities traveled from place to place with a view to spreading the scopes and horizons of their specific religious beliefs and attract people of other religions towards their own. With these motives many Christian missionaries ransacked all over the world. Same is the case with the Buddhist Lamas and the Jain Monks. The purposes of European, Japanese, Chinese and Mughal travelers were different.

It is very famous that travelers like Columbus, Vasco-De-Gama, Fahiyān, Hue-en-Sang, Itsing, Alberuni, Ibn Batutta, Marco Polo, even Indian saints like Swami Vivekananda, Shankracharya, Swami Ramtirth, etc. have travelled for different purposes.

Such TRAVELERS, who have got the creative bent and ability to mould their experiences with due amount of fictional creativity give account of their journeys in artistic vein and this gives shape to what can be termed as 'Travel Literature' – i.e. Travel writing of literary value. As Richard Kerridge puts it:

The traveler offers to be a proxy, venturing into foreign space on behalf of the reader at home, but always maintaining contact with base, through the narrative-address to that reader. He has stepped out of the web of attachments that normally holds him in place, in order to search for something lost or repressed in ordinary life- but only to look at it, or brush against it. (Kerridge 167)

In recent times, Travel and travel writing activities have received a new boost. It has acquired a new height as a flourishing and highly popular literary genre. The books subjecting Travel narrations apparently acquire ranks in the lists of Best-Sellers or are Short-listed for several literary award categories. Reading public also seem to have cultivated some special bent for Travel Narratives, and in the same way, the creative writers too have started taking this form seriously and moulding their travelling experiences in a vast array of both cotemporary and historical Travel books. Presently, the books subjecting 'Travel' and the like experiences cover almost all the debatable issues. There is a vast variety of views expressed from which the traveler undertakes the travel to be able to document it. Travels are undertaken and represented from the variety of angles such as that of a Pilgrim, Expeditions of conquistador and Explorers, Anthropological pursuits to the backpackers. The advancement of Science and Technology has widened the Horizons of Travel from Home land to foreign land; from the Oceans to the Polar Regions and still further Astronomical Expeditions in Space too. The Historic events and literary traditions of human civilization abound in man's love and fascination for travelling activities. Odysseus, Aeneas or the knights of Round Table would appear lacking their very essence without their travelling spirits, or the world would not have been how it is today, had Captain Cook, Columbus, Vasco –de-Gama, Boswell or Byron and in the eastern context the Aryans, Shankaracharya, Buddha, Mahavir and many other Saints like them, had the moguls not left their home to conquer the remote lands....and many others like not undertaken their risky, death encountering expeditions.

Journey is the part of our existence, if taken biological foundation; the existence of any being begins with 'spermatic journey'. French philosopher Gaston Bachelard speaks of the home, the house, as the first location, "Our corner of the world" in which we can "dream in peace". For Bachelard, this first home is a maternal site where the individual is nurtured and from which one emerges to experience the wider world. The connection between home and maternal shelter, and immobility has a biological foundation, for the female body is in fact the child's first place. As Julia Kriseva remarks, "the biological fate causes us to be the site of the species chains us to 'Space, home, native soil, motherland.' This then is the home from which one must depart to be a sojourner of life's roads, the point of departure on the way to find one self....." The funeral procession takes the man to his final journey, the Eternal one-though this journey he fares not on himself but on the shoulders of his kiths and kins, see, how nicely Barakt Virani 'Befam', a Gujarati Poet, has woven the line of life in a journey format:

‘બેફામ’ તોય કેટલું થાકી જવું પડ્યું?  
નહિ તો જીવનનો માર્ગ છે ઘર થી કબર સુધી (Virani *Tahuko*)

How much it proved tiresome 'Befam',

Otherwise, journey of life is en routed from Home to doom only.

(Note: 'Befam' is the pen name of the poet)

In the general sense, life is understood as a journey, from birth to death, and the very essence of our existence; the search of knowledge is also taken in the sense of journey. The Indian Upanishdic Sutras;

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय [O! Lord, lead me from darkness to Light]

असतो मा सद्गमय [From absence of truth to truth]

मृत्योर् मा अमृतम गमय [From Death to Immortality] (Brihadakaranya Upanishad)

too express the process of journey. The concept of life as a journey signifies the act of travel, of transformation, and of an errand.

In the Preface of his book *Travel: A Literary History* Peter Whitfield tracing the facts of Human history asserts:

First, humanity overspread the earth through the process of migration, forming communities and cultures that flourished for long periods in isolation from each other. Then, later, through exploration and resettlement, this isolation was broken down, and the movement began towards the one world which we now inhabit.

Now, as the world has become the global village with the advancements and luxury of travelling facilities, it has ignited this latent tendency of travelling and documenting such experiences artistically. Carl Thompson, defining travel, states, “It (Travel) is the negotiation between self and other that is brought about by movement in space” (Thompson 10). And all travel writing is at some level a record or product of this encounter, and of the negotiation between similarity and difference that it entailed.” Carl Thompson further comments:

Sometimes the encounter will be directly described in writing, which will accordingly offer a narration of the events that occurred during the writer’s travels. In other instances, the encounter itself will only be implicit in the writing, as it offers an account not of the actual travelling but of just the new perspective or new information acquired through travel. (Thompson 10)

If examined minutely, the desire to move, to explore the unexplored has always grabbed the human sensibilities right since the time ancient. Among other desires, man has always felt this basic desire to go elsewhere. This might be perhaps because travel takes man to different places and places him against the variety of differences where he encounters the differences ranging from garments, food-habits, whereabouts, trade and commerce, beliefs, worships and entire culture. His eyes and sensibilities capture the appealing aspects of this otherness, churn them through his imagination and then he prepares an account from a foreign view point. Some journeys may lead the traveler to the known land or through the familiar cultures- i.e. journey within his own nation, still, to use Carl Thompson’s words-all journeys are in a way –“a confrontation with, or more optimistically a negotiation of, what is termed ‘alterity’” (Thompson 09). Mark Cocker calls it: “(Travel) is one of the greatest doors to human freedom, and Travel Book is a medium through which humans celebrate this freedom” (Cocker 260). Travel, thus, is a mode of experiencing the world and it remains an ongoing activity with no terminal point. Travel will never grow old or obsolete.

Just as ‘Travel’ is an ongoing activity, so is the tendency to document it; of writing Travelling Experiences. Ample texts are now available. In that case, a need to create a criteria as to which is precisely considered as a ‘Travel Book’ avidly arises. A

wide array of travel related material is available ranging from 'Travel- Photography', 'Travel- Maps', 'Travel-Guide books', 'Travel based – Films', even now the 24 hour Travel Channels too teem with telecasts of expeditions of travelers nicely recorded in the form of Travel Documentary Films focusing cult, cultures, festivals, Taboos, foods, etc. of foreign lands. From all this Travel Literature has to be somewhat different in form and tone. It may be termed as "book length accounts of journeys that have already been made, and personal narratives of famous and not so famous travelers ranging from Marco polo and Columbus through to contemporary figures such as Bruce Chatwin, Dervla Murphy, Bill Bryson, and Michael Plain" (Thompson 13). In the field of creative writing the works voicing the traveler's experiences are labeled differently as 'Itinerary', 'Voyage and Tours', 'Journeys', 'Reports', etc. The common grounds that bound such works in the same category are their 'Travel-Subject' and the most probably the first person account which presents a systematic chronological narrative of movements and events with geographic and ethnographic observations. The Reports of Travel often invest within their course some fictional devices and wonders along with the descriptions of factual journey foundation. In his essay '*Stirring and Searching*', William H Sherman points out:

(Even) the earliest English Travel Writing was marked by complex rhetorical strategies. Its authors had to balance the known and the unknown, the traditional imperatives of persuasion and entertainment, and their individual interests with those of their patrons, employers and monarchs. Given such diverse purposes, early modern travel writers were often torn between giving pleasure and providing practical guidance, between logging and narrating, between describing what happened and suggesting what could have happened. These rhetorical challenges, along with the novelty of their experiences, left travel writers with acute problems of authenticity and credibility. The myths and stereotypes which could be reproduced in otherwise sober and scholarly accounts led to associations between travel and lying, which accounts for the assurance of writers like John Cartwright (whose title page advertised a 'true journal... of East Indies) that they would only report 'what mine eyes have seen in more remote parts of the world ...contenting myself with the conscience of truth'- claims that would, in turn, be mimicked in the fantastic voyage..... (Sherman 31)

With its developing scopes Travel Writing ceases to be just the account of the traveller detailing only the geographical aspects of travel as the earlier travel books used to do, but it more intensely focuses on the dimensional discourses on society,

culture and ethnography of the places with a concerning critique from a foreign view point. Travel Writer constantly keeps gazing on the 'otherness' of the places and then in recording his/her experiences passes some comments on these aspects of the places. The travel writer engages himself in commenting on the manners, morals and customs, local social and religious beliefs, taboos and the overall culture of the places he visits. Many times the traveler seems interested in some specific aspect of the society or it may be the case that he undertakes his journey with a particular design in mind. This diversification of focus distinguishes the traveler from the Explorers and the Tourists. In this context Paul Fussel in his *Abroad: British Literary Travelling between the Wars* draws lines distinguishing the categories of the three:

"Explorers", according to Hugu and Pauline Massingham, "are to the ordinary traveller what the Saint is to the average Church congregation ..."no traveller, and certainly no tourist, is ever knighted for his performances, although the strains he may undergo can be as memorable as an explorer's. All three make journeys, but the explorer seeks the undiscovered, the traveller, that which has been discovered by the mind working in history, the tourist, that which has been discovered by entrepreneurship and prepared for him by the arts of publicity. The genuine traveller is, or used to be, in the middle between the two extremes. If the explorer moves towards the risks of the formless and unknown, the tourist moves towards the security of pure cliché. It is between these two poles that the traveller meditates, retaining all he can of the excitement or the unpredictable attaching to exploration and fusing that with the pleasure of "knowing where one is" belonging to tourism.

(Originally quoted in- *Travel Writing and the Empire*, ed. Sachidanand Mohanty, Publisher Katha-2003 P. No. Xi)

The travel writer, as said above, might have many designs, views and patterns in his mind while under taking his travelling project. And as he goes to the foreign land he comes across the way of the life of that place and people. He comes in a close contact with the local traditions and customs, and all these things arrest his consciousness which draw his reflections out about them. In this connection the prolific British travel writer, Geoffrey Moorhouse makes right observation that:

The travel narrative is indeed in a rather special category of literature: it can include topographical description, history, autobiography, reminiscence about almost anything under the sun that you think your readers will tolerate as having some relevance to your journey or your disquisition on a particular place. (Moorhouse 18)

A travel book, sometimes, serves/holds panoramic details of an inner voyage of the writer. The descriptions along with the outer voyages, also allow the reader to have a view of the author's inner conflicts, thought processes and his self discoveries. The narrative often shifts shudder from the outer landscapes to the inner ones, writer's own reflections, memories or examples/parables from his stock experiences. In this context Carl Thompson rightly points out:

Yet insofar as most forms of Post medieval travel writing do incorporate some elements of personal information and first person narration, the genre may be regarded as an important branch of what is now often termed 'life-writing'. That is to say, Travel Writing has frequently provided a medium in which writers can conduct an autobiographical project, exploring questions of identity and selfhood whilst simultaneously presenting to others a self "authorised" accounts of themselves. Moreover, the generic requirement to include an element of personal detail ensures that travelogues will often offer interesting insights into what is termed an individual's subject position, even when travel writer have not deliberately set out to write in such a self-reflective fashion. (Thompson 99)

Thus in a way just as the player arrests the attention of the spectator along with his/her interest in the overall score-development of the game, the travel writer's personality also becomes a butt of attention for the reader along with the place travelled. It remains the same even when the writer strictly maintains to be objective one and prefers to give only impersonalised details and descriptions- but still as a rule, the selection of the issues arresting his attention would naturally reflect his bent and preferences. In the accounts where the writer prefers to be eloquent about his self- the driving motive remains simply to render what he himself felt and experienced and judged during the journey. There are a number of narrative techniques evolved through which the writer inserts his self revelation into the travel narratives. However, the amount and articulation of the 'self' may vary depending upon the individual style of the writer. Some would pick up some singular sentences or slider passages in order to reflect how they feel/felt; whereas in some cases we find the writer manages to throw light on the entire flux of his consciousness at the given time of journey. Carl Thompson aptly holds this as:

In some travelogues, then, the journey functions to some extent as a narrative device whereby the author's whole life may be brought into focus. Many travelogues of this type also present the journey as a key stimulus to a new understanding of the traveller's life. In this way, the travel account does not



just offer a larger history of growing self; it is also plotted as a developmental narrative of growing self-knowledge and self-realization. It thus becomes a record not just of a literal journey, but also of a metaphorical interior ‘voyage’ that represents an important existential change in the traveller. (Thompson 114)

Travel and travel accounts bring out the fact that travel not only holds the traveler against the foreign cultures but it also exposes to his/her realizations what is foreign within him/her ‘self’. The traveller finds an opportunity during his travels to be face to face with the inner self which very often take place owing to his/her being away from the home land or much familiar things and moreover when the foreign things appear much different from the things and ways he/she is usually accustomed to, this makes him/her to probe into the self and thus, begins the journey inside. Pico Iyer in his essay ‘Why We Travel’ nicely exposes this point:

Thus travel spins us round in two ways at once: It shows us the sights and values and issues that we might ordinarily ignore; but it also, and more deeply, shows us all the parts of ourselves that might otherwise grow rusty. For in travelling to a truly foreign place, we inevitably travel to moods and states of mind and hidden inward passages that we’d otherwise seldom have a cause to visit.

And,

We travel, then, in search of both self and anonymity — and, of course, in finding the one we apprehend the other. Abroad, we are wonderfully free of caste and job and standing; we are, as Hazlitt puts it, just the “gentlemen in the parlour,” and people cannot put a name or tag to us. And precisely because we are clarified in this way, and freed of inessential labels, we have the opportunity to come into contact with more essential parts of ourselves (which may begin to explain why we may feel most alive when far from home). (Pico Iyer)

Thus, in a way, ‘Travel’ proves a catalyst-agent which arouses the writer to fare the journey not only outward but inward too. And the text produced thus turns out to be product of both internal and outer voyages. The traveller first fares the original journey, sometimes writing and maintaining logs and personal points of reflection, then, at home once again he, in order to write, undertakes the entire journey in his mental domain, selecting , enacting, creating and erasing and above all ordering and re-arranging the whole enterprise of his travel with the hypothetical audience he addresses in mind.

Now in the style of serving and presenting his material, the travel writers have their own preferences and personal signature styles too. Some prefer to present the journey in its actual colour presenting every details; how the routes were selected, distances were covered and what hardships he had to encounter en route to the destination, whereas, some writers would not prefer to draw much on the process of journey but rather they would comment on just the outcome of the journey undertaken, and their own personal reflection on the culture and the people they came across. In the narration techniques too, some travel writers present their own material simply in the form of the first person singular account, with the narrative 'I', and allowing the readers to go through the text with his opinions and observations, whereas sometimes, the narrator hides behind the mask and presents the picture from his own superior infestations. In some other case, as does Dalrymple in *Nine Lives*, the writer acts just as a link and apart from providing the framework and occasional informative outlines, remains in the background and presents the tales of the tellers in their own terms. Sometimes, there is a tendency among the travel writers to adopt the readymade route upon which some earlier traveller/historic figures had travelled and presented the world with his own full-fledged travel account, now the modern travel writer follows the footstep of that ancient traveler and prepares his own brand new travel book, just as Dalrymple has done in the cases of his 'In Xanadu'; in which he has adopted the famous silk route which was trodden earlier by Marco Polo, and 'From the Holy Mountain'; the footsteps of the great Byzantine traveler-monk John Moschos. Commenting over the motives of Modern travel writers behind adoption of such schemes, Peter Hulme points out, "...more often the routes are being retraced in order to mark the historical gap between the two moments and perhaps to throw light on the earlier work, though the connection with earlier and usually better known traveler can also serve as an attractive marketing device" (Hulme, Peter 98). Many modern travel writers prefer to stay in the foreign lands for a considerable longer span of period and then having encountered the culture and ethnography at the close quarters, prepare the stuff of their books. This kind of scheme allows the author many advantages as he stays for a longer period, he can collect ample material about the culture he observes, can pick up details of the cultural beliefs, mythical backgrounds and social eccentricities of the people of that land. William Dalrymple's *City of Djinnns*, *The Age of Kali*, and *Nine Lives*, Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* are the results of the authors' longer stays in particular land. From the view point of the tonal varieties too, there are a variety of experimentations found in the compositions.

The genre admits of both very serious and very humorous writing, and tonally can encompass everything from earnest polemic to inconsequential whimsy, from poetic lyricism to crude farce. It also spans the complete spectrum of what one might term 'high-brow', 'middle-brow' and 'low-brow' writing. This is to say some travel books clearly aspire to the status of 'literature', through the gravity of topics they discuss or the sophistication of their writing, whilst others make no such cultural claim, being unashamedly exercises in easy reading and/or sensationalism. (Thompson 17-18)

On the Structuralistic basis a creative piece of travel narrative works upon 'Travel' as its very foundation and the 'story-element' in it constitutes its framework i.e. form. The study of different travel texts allows one to observe that though journey remains at the very foundation, some travellers dig deep into the myths and history of the place, in other cases one would find the travellers' keen interests in the cultural variances and in still some others the writers' focus remains concentrated over socio-political issues, demographic pursuits. Many travel books may also address the audience picking up the socio-scientific issues in the realistic vein but narrating them woven into purely fictional devices. The varying degree of subjectivity, weaving of the realist issues in the fictional devices, the employing of socio-scientific strategies and methodologies in the composition of travel narratives triggers the debate about the genre of Travel Writing. Debbie Lisle points out the framework of Travel Narratives just identical to the fictional narratives following the scheme of Beginning (Home), Middle (Away) and an End (Home). (Lisle 39) The traveller gets ready to travel and the preparatory prelude goes in the framing up of the Beginning of any travel text. The middle constitutes the details of the real travel. And the End constitutes the arrival at home and the writers' exercise of collecting the filling stuff for the composition of the Journey into the narrative. The end result that emerges is the outcome of the writer's creative competence. And at the root of all this exercise there always remains at the base of the writer's mind a hypothetical audience whom he engages through his narrative. Paul Fussel observes in his *Abroad*:

A travel book, at its purest, is addressed to those who do not plan to follow the traveller at all, but who require the exotic comic anomalies, wonders, and scandals of literary form romance, which their own place or time cannot entirely supply ... aren't all travel books really romances in the old sense, with the difference that the adventures are located within an actual, often famous, topography? (Fussel 203)

As the traveller finds himself in the foreign land, observing the all the difference that come his ways and pointing out the peculiarities, trying to bridge the gaps of communication and cultures, in all this exercises in the cases of travellers one thing is common that the traveller toils alone and therefore it is natural that he turns to himself. This fact makes the travel account personal and sometimes one finds flares of personal memoire and traces of autobiography. In this connection Paul Fussel further suggests regarding a piece of travel writing as:

a sub-species of memoir in which the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker's encounter with distant or unfamiliar data, and in which the narrative – unlike that in a novel or a romance – claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality. (Fussel 203)

Still, to consider travel writing just as a subjective reporting would be not enough, but it imbricates other forms too. Jonathan Rabban sums up this nature of travel literature with the metaphor of an open house:

As a literary form, travel writing is a notoriously raffish open house where different genres are likely to end up in the bed. It accommodates the private diary, the essay, the short story, the prose poem, the rough note and polished table talk with indiscriminate hospitality. It freely mixes narrative and discursive writing. (Raban 254-55)

The same nature of travel texts has been described in somewhat different terms when Thomas Swick talks of it as:

The travel book itself has a similar grab bag quality. It incorporates the characters and plot line of a novel, the descriptive power of poetry, the substance of a history lesson, the discursiveness of an essay, and the—often inadvertent—self-revelation of a memoir. It revels in the particular while occasionally illuminating the universal. It colors and shapes and fills in gaps. Because it results from displacement, it is frequently funny. It takes readers for a spin (and shows them, usually, how lucky they are). It humanizes the alien. More often than not it celebrates the unsung. It uncovers truths that are stranger than fiction. It gives eyewitness proof of life's infinite possibilities. (Swick, Thomas)

In the same attempts of making a decisive comment on the genre of travel writing texts, Tim Youngs keeps the debate alive by stating:

Travel writing feeds from and back into other forms of literature. To try to identify boundaries between various forms would be impossible and I would be deeply suspicious of any attempt at the task. (Youngs 08)

Travel Narratives' and Accounts' significance in enacting the History is also beyond doubt. Herodotus, 450 to 430 BC, the father of History, wrote the seminal histories which, if taken in general sense, were nothing but the travel accounts. The main topics on which Herodotus presented his accounts were the war fares between Greece and Persia. "Rather than merely narrating events in the course of war, he chose to portray the conflicts as a clash between the cultures, to contrast the beliefs, practices and characters of the foreign nations with those of the Greeks" (Whitfield 5). The most initial Historical Accounts, in this way, were in the forms of travel narratives. Even the historical accounts of Xenophon 'Anabasis', also go in the same line of Herodotus and present the War between Greece and Persia. Polybius, in the second century BC, too presents the History of war between Rome and Carthage in the form of travel narrative which present the reality of travel in a high mountain landscape. The concepts of chivalrous spirits and valiant efficiencies started attributed to the person's capacity and positions in visiting several unknown lands and regions.

Trade was a strong force for many travellers to undertake long journeys to distant lands. Then in the course of time it was fairly replaced by the urge to explore the unexplored and seek knowledge which other civilizations evolved in their own unique ways. Many great explorers spent many formidable years of their lives in search of knowledge namely Vasco-de-Gama, Columbus, Alexander the great, Marco Polo, Huen-Tsang, Ibn Batuta, Gautam Buddha, Adi Shankara, Swami Vivekananda and many more. In this way, Travel writing has flourished though the ages, and early travel accounts by explorers and other travellers continue to be valued as a significant source of information about historical cultures and places.

Travel writing seems to be resulted from man's natural instinct to know and record the things from beyond his general surroundings. Peter Hulme and Tim Young put in the Introduction of Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing: "The traveller's tale is as old as fiction itself: one of the very earliest extant stories, composed in Egypt during the twelfth Dynasty, a thousand years before the Odyssey, tells of a shipwrecked sailor alone on the marvelous island" (Peter 02).

William Sherman in his essay *Stirring and Searching* asserts that the historic motive of mapping the world and documenting the routes in order to provide ease and direction to the travellers who would follow in their footsteps and fill in the gaps of geographical knowledge. Bavin, Columbus, Francis Drake, Richard Eden, Richard Haklute—were some of the explorers who ventured to put on the paper the unfathomable bounty of the world at the early stages. Another analysis, Sherman gives us is, the 'Typology of Travel Writers' of the first two centuries. "The two

centuries of Travel Writers”, he puts, “...have sometimes been characterised as a period in which the Pilgrim gave way to merchants, the Explorers and the philosophers,... when Sir Thomas Palmer published his chart of various kinds of travellers in 1606 he included preachers, postmen, soldiers and spies” ( Sherman 21).

Almost all the records of early travels exhibit specific patterns showing all these explorations were based either on spiritual or on the commercial motives. And in turn, the textual representations enjoyed extreme popularity on account of people’s basic fascination for getting the details of ‘unknown’ and this attraction of people and ‘the gratitude generated in them for the Wanderer for having experienced something extraordinary’ – lured the travel-story-tellers to attribute something magical in their accounts as they stayed assured that whatever they would narrate would, without a bit of doubt, go with ease among the people, rather it would attract them towards it. “...authors played with the boundaries between eyewitness testimony, second-hand information, and outright invention, and readers were often unsure whether they were reading truth or fiction” (Sherman 31). These traits of fake, fiction and inventions in the travel accounts might have earned the entire volume of travel writing ‘second rate’ title in the realm of serious literature.

Another major motive behind Travelers’ leaving Home and heading for the Foreign Lands has remained the ambitions of expansion of the stately territories. The Royal Dynasties intentionally funded the daring travelers to explore the unknown lands and collect useful knowledge about the prospective lands which can be taken under their Regimes. After the formation of large imperial states, travel accounts emerged as a prominent literary genre in many lands. In European societies, after the Renaissance awakening people ventured to the distant corners of the world and tried to expand not only their own knowledge but through the new born technology of printing presses, brought out numerous travel narratives. These narratives presented the worlds they saw from their own superior mental set ups. And at Home there were people who ardently waited with insatiable appetite for news about the larger world. The spirits of Discoveries drove the European Travellers with such intensity that they ransacked the interior regions of Africa, America and the major parts of Asian Continents just at the begging of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The colonial administrators had their own vested interests.

Although there is a consistent pattern of travel writing through the centuries, travelogues and adventure narratives became extremely popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with great impetus provided to the realm through imperialism and colonization of territories. The Western travellers ransacked the

recesses of the globe with their singular mission to explore the undiscovered parts of the earthly planet. In the 20th century, travel related writings evolved into several different categories, including a vast number of travel guidebook series, travel-related periodicals, and travel diaries, recordings of scientific and exploratory missions, adventure narratives, and semi-autobiographical accounts of personal travels. The main trait behind the extreme popularity of this kind of the texts was it served the reading public the elements of mystery, the imaginary adventures of the far and unknown regions.

After the years of enlightenment, the European spirits of discovery led many expeditions, the major among them were those of Captain Cook's Pacific Explorations. The travel accounts of these expeditions gained great popularity as well as social reactions. The accounts on the Tahiti islands by his ship '*Endeavour*' collected much attentions as the descriptions of these islands and the way of life of these islanders served the element of wonder to the reading public. Another great and noteworthy paradigm of eighteenth century travel was the emerging popularity of the Grand Tour of Europe, which exposed the English Youth to the culture of the European Continent in entirety and enabled them to have direct practice of the aristocratic etiquettes:

A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On those shores were the four great empires of the world; the Assyrian, the Persian The Grecian and the Roman. All our religion, almost all our laws, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above Savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean. (Boswell's Life of Johnson 505) (Originally quoted by Peter Whitefield in *Travel: a Literary History* 154)

Since the entire route to Italy was predetermined and conventionalised, there was a little room for any variations and so few were the chances of its varied recreation:

Within this rigid framework, the promise of great travel literature would appear to be slight, and there is undoubtedly a sameness about the records of the Grand Tour. The skill of the writer was to ring innumerable variations on a few basic themes, to infuse personal colour, life, adventure or eccentricity into the conventionalised experience. A competitiveness quickly arose among writers as to who could bring back the most colourful stories, the most whimsical, eccentric or bizarre. As a result, the artistic beauties of Florence,

Venice and Rome almost invariably came second to stories about the roads, the inns, the local characters and villains, the grand parties, the loose morals, and—if the traveller was of the elite – the life of the European courts which he visited. Thomas Gray, who made the Grand Tour in 1739-41 in the company of Horace Walpole, even wrote a satirical ‘Outline for a Book of Travels’, which makes it perfectly clear what he thought of the typical literature of the Tour. (Whitefield 155)

Eighteenth century produced numerous texts on the Grand Tour, to mention chief and noteworthy among them are – *The Diary of John Evelyn*, *The Voyage of Italy*, *The Letters of Horace Walpole*.

When travel and travelling activities were so much so in vague, how could creative writing maintain distance from them? There were artists and men of letters who moulded their creativity into this pattern and produced fiction on travel during the eighteenth century. Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) enacts the adventures of the protagonist in isolation. Jonathan Swift uses the travel phenomenon in his own unique way in his *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). Johnson Rasselas tries to drive the point home through the extensive travels of the protagonist that though man journeys from place to place in search of pleasures and happiness the ideal happiness is quite unobtainable. And the entire versions of the Picaresque Novels modeled themselves on the wandering adventures of the roughish hero.

The nineteenth century bears the flair of romanticism and spirits of wonder in the travel accounts. By this time, England had almost established herself in the many of the Asian and African nations. Byron used travel as a poetic strategy and presented the world in the essence of remoteness and escape. Swinburne, Thackeray and Ruskin also produced great stuff on travel. Moreover, there were ample accounts on the English colonies spread on the earth.

The new emerging travel and information technologies have turned the world into a small Hutch, transforming the travel into a mass activity. Even people started emigrations on the social, political or on the commercial plains. There are generations of writers who have made foreign lands their second home and given rise to what is termed as ‘Diaspora Literature’ in the modern creative literature. Writers and artists such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, and Pablo Picasso were themselves émigrés, living much of their adult lives outside the nations of their birth.

The years between the two World Wars proved much more prolific and productive, and Paul Fussler rightly hails the decade of 1930s as ‘the Golden Era’ of travel writing, especially in Britain. In the hands of the writers like D. H. Lawrence



and Andre Gide, travel writing obtained new heights of popularity. As Carl Thompson puts it:

In a decade that witnessed a global economic depression, the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, and ultimately the outbreak of the Second World War, the travelogue seemed to enable a more direct engagement with worldly affairs and with politics than was possible in the traditional literary genres. Figures such as George Orwell, Graham Green, Evelyn Waugh, Peter Fleming, Robert Byron, Ernest Hemingway, Rebecca West and Freya Stark accordingly took up the travel writing genre, and utilised it to diverse ends: as a form of political and cultural commentary (in case of Orwell and West); as a source of comic adventures (Fleming and Waugh); or as a means of exploring subjectivity, memory and the unconscious (Greene). (Thompson 58)

After the wars too the genre sustained the interests of both the creative artists and the reading public. The flux of new age travel writing displayed a variety of innovative approaches in the genre. The chief among them can be enumerated as that of Paul Theroux's *The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train through Asia* (1975), and *The Patagonian Express* (1979), Peter Matthiesen's *The Snow Leopard* (1975), Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977) and Robin Davidson's *Tracks* (1980). The travel literature of this time, thus, exhibits a variety of interests and tonal diversifications.

Exactly during this time came Edward Said's seminal study *Orientalism* (1978). Said's study evoked a great attention towards and critical debates on travel writing. Said's argument in it is: "the observations on all the oriental lands, people and culture made by the Western Travellers are with a pattern of constructing them as savage, primitive and as the antithesis of a supposedly more enlightened West. Only these sort of superior motives have generally driven the Westerners to serve their ideological ends and to justify their colonial ambitions in these regions".

The entire domain of the travel literature, if taken superficially, exhibits the western hegemony. And the whole corpus of travel literature reflects that the world was ransacked only by the western travelers and the documentation of it happened in the western languages only. But the facts go in the different directions.

Actually in the initial phases, i.e. before 1500, the major travel accounts were produced from the eastern sides, especially by the Chinese and the Muslim travelers. These travel accounts were focused mainly on the trade and commercial activities and the spiritual concerns of pilgrimage. A mural in the Mogao Caves from the ca. 7th century recounts the famous travels of Zhang Qian, an imperial envoy of the Han emperor, who traveled across Central Asia

from 139 to ca.126 BCE and returned with accurate information about the western regions, which the Han dynasty then successfully colonized. Pilgrimage, a spiritually-motivated journey distinct in many religions, prompted thousands of Buddhists pilgrims to record their travels from East Asia to sacred sites in India where the Buddha was believed to have lived and taught.

In the Islamic world, Rihla literature, an entire genre of Muslim travel literature, was born out of the fifth pillar of Islam—to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. One writer, Ibn Jubayr, recorded his journey from Spain to Mecca from 1183 to 1185 and is recognized as the founder of Rihla. While more men than women wrote travel accounts in the pre-modern era, there were some women too who prepared their accounts of Hajj. Christian women too left behind their pilgrimage accounts, including the famous, *Itinerarium Egeriae*, or *Travels of Egeria*, a fourth-century Gallic woman who recounted her travels to Jerusalem and other Christian holy sites. She made religious travel quite popular among western European women who could afford the pilgrimage.

After 1500, Muslim and Asian travel accounts continued in large numbers, but now accounts of European adventurers, missionaries, explorers, and merchants overshadowed their Eastern counterparts due to the newly-invented printing press and an increasingly literate Europe that was eager to explore, conquer and eventually colonize regions far beyond their borders. European publishers churned out thousands of copies while editors, such as Richard Hakluyt in the sixteenth century, began to organize and compile travel narratives. Scholarship in the past twenty years or so depicts the genre of travel writing as part of the European imperial project, yet this Eurocentric view fails to take into account the numerous non-European travel narratives, both historic and contemporary. The abundance and varieties of travel and travelers in world history and the prolific literature produced on Travels offer not only new scholarship, but also practical applications for using travel literature in the classroom. (Maxwell, Mary)

## **Women Travellers and Their Travel Accounts:**

Basically, for centuries in almost all the civilizations on the earth, travel and adventures are the qualities mainly attributed to the masculine power and prowess. On the other hand women are soundly rooted with the household responsibilities as that of bringing up the children and looking after the entire family activities. Moreover even though women remained present on travels along with the men as wives, caretakers or nurses, in the Patriarchal ideology to have their responses on such travels is quite that of a remote dream. The stamp of 'sessility' that has been stuck on the women on the grounds that they are firmly rooted in the family and that is why immobile and have nothing to do with the prowess of travels and mobility, showed no sign of weakening late until nineteenth century. During the phase of colonisation of the different parts of the world proved the most fertile phase for the production of the Travel Accounts and it is also true that in all the wake Women had accompanied men, still, as Sara Mills observes:

....., women as individuals and as writers are always seen to be marginal to the process of colonialism. A further reason why the colonial context is not considered by critics is that women's writing and their involvement in colonialism was markedly different from men's; their work was informed by different discursive frameworks and pressures. It is these frameworks which I shall map out. Because of the way that discourses of femininity circulated within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women travel writers were unable to adopt the imperialist voice with the ease with which male writers did. The writing, which they produced, tended to be more tentative than male writing, less able to assert the 'truths' of British rule without qualification. Because of their oppressive socialisation and marginal position in relation to imperialism, despite their generally privileged class position, women writers tended to concentrate on descriptions of people as individuals, rather than on statements about the race as a whole. It is in their struggle with the discourses of imperialism and femininity, neither of which they could wholeheartedly adopt, and which pulled them in different textual directions, that their writing exposes the unsteady foundations on which it is based. (Mills 03)

And the few women travel accounts, just like the oasis in the wide and far dessert, were full of subjective concerns and lacking confidence and full of textual unease that the critics like Paul Fussel did not admit them as the travel accounts or as

the stuff of creative writing at all. Carl Thompson too makes quite similar observations in this regards:

If the female traveller contravenes the patriarchal ideology of separate spheres by quitting her home and venturing out into the world, the female travel writer, or at least, the woman who publishes a travel account, contravenes that ideology twice over. Not only does she travel, she then positions herself a second time in the public sphere, as an author; and a reluctance to take up the latter role is a further reason why there are so few published travelogues by women prior to 1800. Even the noteworthy point in some of the nineteenth century women travelogues, the women travel writers have adopted the epistolary or the Diary format claiming that the observations and reflections made in them were for personal references only and never intended to be published. (Thompson 180)

In the modern era, with the safe and speedy travel technologies, women tread the world as freely and fearlessly as their male counterparts. They receive ample room in publishing their accounts presenting to the world from a feministic view points. Still, there rings the note of resentments from the women travellers that they often “find themselves confronted with the cultural expectations and stereotypes which assume some types of travel and travel writing, and arguably the very notion of travel per se, to be more commonly a masculine rather than a feminine activity” (Thompson 180).

### **Critical Reactions:**

Critical reaction to travel narratives has a mixed history, with scholars such as Paul Fussell perceiving many of these texts as a “heaven for second-rate [literary] talents”; yet their popularity continues unabated, with travel writers having achieved remarkable commercial success. A notable example is the set of memoirs by British author Peter Mayle about France's Provence region, his adopted home. According to Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, writers such as Mayle appeal to a mostly middle-class readership, and while their success is to be lauded, both critics caution against travel writing that “frequently provides an effective alibi for the perpetuation and reinstallation of ethnocentrically superior attitudes to ‘other’ cultures, peoples, and places.” Holland and Huggan concede, nonetheless, that despite its accompanying prejudices, the very act of writing about another culture or place introduces it to a wider audience, allowing for the formation of new cultural affiliations and links that promote analysis and reassessment. In contrast to eighteenth and nineteenth-century

imperialist travel narratives, contemporary travel narratives cover a wide range of points of view, including those of postcolonial travellers, women, and environmentalists. In addition, the horizons for travel-related texts continues to expand, through venues such as travel periodicals, the increased popularity of television programs focusing on travel and adventure, and the incredible mobility provided by modern means of travel. Even, the advancement and the spread of the computer technology and the facilities have given birth to a new kind of travel writings in the form of “Travel Blogs” --- which are easily accessible as well as get publication with a click of mouse.....

Moreover, there are now ample travel accounts in English as well as in the other vernacular languages which present the eastern reflections on the west. The African Continent’s reaction to what was popularised by the colonial traders rings the agitations of the natives for their unique cultures and traditions being painted with the labels of savageness and unscrupulous practices. Writers like Chinua Achebe have registered their resentments for such practices through their meritorious creative works.

In the ‘Introduction’ to his edited book “Travel Writing and the Empire”, Sachidananda Mohanty, commenting on the changing trends of Travel Writing notes that:

Travel Writing is more than a geographical account, local colour, spirit of place, or depiction of manners and morals, and is actually a form of a memoir, an autobiography, dates back to Emerson and Thoreau, if not to the earlier masters. What is radically new is perhaps the perception that travel books map out the territories of mind, définé contours of nations and communities, and determine forms of cultural and political representations. They mediate across disciplinary boundaries and knowledge systems. Thus, while the earlier approaches retain their charm and validity, the newer ones pose challenges to our earlier paradigms. Properly handled, they illuminate our understanding of society and culture. (Mohanty xvii)

In this way to conclude with the words of Evi Misti, “Travel, like translation – a word semantically related to it – functions as a cross-cultural process challenging and eventually changing the boundaries of both geographical and ideological insularity”.

After an in-depth study of the various critical approaches to the travel writing and having concentrated on several popular travel texts, the researcher has pinpointed certain salient key-features of travel writing, which to a greater or lesser degree operate in the composition of the travel narratives:

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#### Salient Features of Travel Writing:

- ✓ Travel writing centers on a key event, text or on the route designed by the writer.
- ✓ Sometimes, the writer picks up major happenings on his travelling experiences and narrates with his creative bent.
  - uses background information that builds up to this event/text or the route.
  - may incorporate research to enhance the background information—even if the writer didn't know the information things at the time of the visit.
  - clearly describes the location and focuses on elements that are key to the story or experience.
  - clearly describes any important people so that readers feel as if they know them a little.
  - clearly presents the geographical and ethnographic details.
  - focuses on the special festivals, conventions, taboos of the culture of the place he visits.
  - uses dialogue where possible to help the story “happen” for the reader.
  - mixes reflections on the experience with the retelling to help the reader see the importance of the experience.
  - may present the writer's own journey within as travel offers him/her to be more with ‘self’ in the different culture and environment.
  - caters the interest of the readers by keeping the narrative free, jovial and replete with the clues that keep the reader's curiosity alive.
  - may invest the myths/beliefs or any other popular story about the place.
  - presents the historical details of the place in an attempt to link the past and the present of the places under focus.
  - tries to represent the things and experiences in the contextual framework of his hypothetical audience.

- ✓ The narrative envisages the writer as the hero of the travel. The heroism lies in the encounter with the unknown and uncertainties. The difficulties encountered in the entire process of the travelling and recounting forms the major part of the narrative. The journey can be accomplished in the company of some sort of companions who emerge in the narrative as sidekicks.
- ✓ The constant reference to the difference becomes a narrative strategy which reinforces the binary of us/them.
- ✓ The travel can become the strategy for demonstrating cultural superiority of one's own society or the nation over the other. Inversely, it can also occasion a severe critique of one's own culture vis-a-vis other.
- ✓ (Travel writing) may also serve the purpose of righting the historical wrongs committed to one's own culture by the other.
- ✓ may be taken as the textual representation of cultural interaction operated on the preferences and bent of the writer himself.

## Biography of William Dalrymple



Figure I : William Dalrymple.

(<http://www.williamdalrymple.uk.com/biog>)

William Dalrymple was born in Scotland in 1965, and brought up on the shores of the Firth of Forth. He was educated at Ampleforth and Trinity College, Cambridge where he was first History Exhibitioner then Senior History Scholar. Literature and literary studies perhaps are the genetic bonds for him, as he belongs to the family of Virginia Woolf; his father was a cousin of Virginia Woolf.

In 1986, while still at college, he set off to follow on foot the outward route of Marco Polo from Jerusalem to Mongolia and wrote a highly acclaimed best-seller about the journey, *In Xanadu*, when he was twenty-two. The book won the 1990 Yorkshire Post Best First Work Award and a Scottish Arts Council Spring Book Award; it was also short-listed for the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize. In 1989 Dalrymple moved to Delhi where he lived for five years researching his second book, *City of Djinns*, which won the 1994 Thomas Cook Travel Book Award and the Sunday Times Young British Writer of the Year Award. *From the Holy Mountain*, his acclaimed study of the demise of Christianity in its Middle Eastern homeland, was awarded the Scottish Arts Council Autumn Book Award for 1997; it was also short-listed for the 1998 Thomas Cook Award, the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and the Duff Cooper Prize. A collection of his writings about India, *The Age of Kali*, won the French Prix Astrolabe in 2005.

In 1999, he changed genres and after four books of travel, concentrated on the writing of history. *White Mughals* was published in 2003, and the book won Britain's most prestigious history prize, the Wolfson Prize, in 2003. It was also awarded the Scottish Book of the Year Prize, and was short-listed for the PEN History Award, the Kiriyama Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. The book is to be made into a major motion picture, directed by Academy Award Winner, Ralph Fiennes. *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857*, described as 'a masterpiece' in the New York Review of Books, won the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize for History and India's leading literary award, the Vodafone/Crossword award for Non Fiction. It was also long listed for the Samuel Johnson Prize.

*Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*, published in 2009, won the Asia House Literary Award and was again long listed for the Samuel Johnson Prize. Wendy Dingier wrote of it in the TLS, 'A glorious mix of anthropology, history and the history of religions, packaged in writing worthy of a good novel...Not since Kipling has anyone evoked village India so movingly. Only a brilliant writer like Dalrymple could bring off this astonishing and unprecedented revelation of the humanity of people on the farthest extremes of religious ecstasy.' On the release of the book, Dalrymple toured the US, the UK, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Holland and Australia with a band consisting of some of the Indian and Pakistani mystics featured in his book, including Sufis, Fakirs, Bauls, Theveram hymn singers and a prison warder and part-time Theyyam dancer widely believed to be an incarnation of the



God Vishnu, performing music and poetry from the book; the tour culminated in a sell-out performance in the Sydney Opera House.

A frequent broadcaster, he wrote and presented three television series *Stones of the Raj* (Channel 4), *Sufi Soul* (Channel 4) and *Indian Journeys* (BBC/PBS), the last of which won the Grierson Award for Best Documentary Series at BAFTA in 2002. His Radio 4 series on the history of British spirituality and mysticism, *The Long Search*, won the 2002 Sandford St Martin Prize for Religious Broadcasting and was described by the judges as ‘thrilling in its brilliance.’

In 2002 he was awarded the Mungo Park Medal by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society for his ‘outstanding contribution to travel literature’. He received the Sykes Medal in 2005 from the Royal Society for Asian Affairs for his contribution "to understanding contemporary Islam." In March 2008, he won the James Todd Memorial Prize and in 2011, was awarded the Media Citizen Puraskar by the Indian Confederation of NGOs for emphasizing as an author of issues of global importance and concern. In December 2005 his article on the madrasas of Pakistan was awarded the prize for Best Print Article of the Year at the 2005 Foreign Press Association Media Awards

He has three honorary doctorates of letters, from the University of St Andrews ‘for his services to literature and international relations, to broadcasting and understanding,’ from the University of Lucknow ‘for his outstanding contribution in literature and history’, and from the University of Aberdeen ‘for his contribution to the writing of the history of India.’ Two more, from the Universities of Chichester and Bradford.

William Dalrymple is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, the Royal Geographical Society and of the Royal Asiatic Society, and is a founder and co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival. He is a regular contributor to the *New Yorker*, the *Guardian*, the *TLS*, and the *New York Review of Books*, and is the India correspondent of the *New Statesman*.

His *The Return of a King: the First Battle for Afghanistan 1839–42*, about the First Anglo-Afghan War, was published in paperback in February-20\_ by Bloomsbury in the UK and India and the US by Vintage. He co-curated a major exhibition on Late Mughal Art, *Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi, 1707–1857* for

the Asia Society in New York, to run from February to May 2012. He is currently the Whitney J. Oates Fellow in Humanities at *Princeton* University.

William is married to the artist Olivia Fraser and they have three children; Ibby, Sam and Adam. William resides at a farm on the outskirts of Delhi with his family for ten months of the year. In his talks with Victoria Moore, (7:00AM BST 02 July 2013) [<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/restaurants/10148823/William-Dalrymple-I-fatten-up-in-London-then-diet-in-India.html> at 14:17 18/11/ 2014], William admits that “There is a big difference between life in India and life here. We have the full Down town there. Here, you can just go down and have coffee in the morning half-naked without worrying, but the drawback is that you have to go and get your own light bulb when one blows, and remember how to unscrew a plug. The London months are usually a round of lunches and book publicity”. About his love for India, William clearly confesses in his talks with Anand Raj OK, Features Editor, Friday Magazine, “I’ve never looked back... never really left India,” he says. “I am obsessed with the country and just cannot think of living anywhere else.” Ascribing reason for his love for India, he mentions that, “a small trickle of Bengali blood that’s in me”. His maternal great-great-grandmother Sophia Pattle was the daughter of a Bengali woman. “I’m sure at some level the familiarity must have come from that. Heredity works in its own ways,” he happily mentions the point to Anand Raj. William also points out that in his life he had never imagined nor ever dreamt of coming to India. As a history scholar at Cambridge, he was more keen to go on a dig in an archaeological site in Iraq. “But the job fell through at the last minute when Saddam Hussain closed the British School of Archaeology in Baghdad.” One of his friends who was going to India asked him if he would go along. “And at the last minute, just like that, I agreed,” he says. “It must have been a mixture of extreme strangeness and familiarity – the latter a result of the colonial rule – that I jumped at the chance to go along to India.” In his another interview with Nanki Singh, [Hindustan Times Chandigarh, November 01, 2014], on an event of Chandigarh Literature Festival, Dalrymple once again comes to his point of arriving in India and admits that I was backpacking and had a budget of Rs. 35 a day but it was the trip that changed my life,” he reminisces. India has been good for him he says and also good to him. “As my interests have changed, India has accommodated them,” he smiles fondly.

After backpacking and hanging out in Goa for a few weeks – a magnet for Westerners in India because of its pristine beaches – Dalrymple found himself being drawn to Delhi. “It was the ruins in and around India’s capital that fascinated me,” says Dalrymple. “I kept imagining all the history lying buried there.”

As much as he loves being in India, he says he finds it frustrating being an outsider even though he has lived in the country for so long. “But as a writer it keeps you sharp and there are a lot of things that still surprise you. There are things you don’t understand. There are things you keep asking questions about... India is so complicated. You can never get complacent and it is in that need to answer questions that my books come about.”

William, being an avid researcher goes to any extent in order to collect material for his bestselling books. In such pursuits he travels in the lands and regions which hold an apparent danger even to one’s life itself. He has been shot at in Kashmir and in Palestine. He narrowly missed a sniper attack and was nearly killed while researching a book in Afghanistan. Dalrymple, who has won a clutch of awards, including the Sunday Times Young British Writer of the Year Award, the Wolfson Prize for History and the Asia House Award for Asian Literature, scoured libraries and archives in England, India, Pakistan and Kabul for details of the war but wasn’t satisfied with what he found. The perfectionist that he is, he also wanted to see the place where the battle between the British troops and the Afghans was fought.

It’s this attention to detail, desire to “live the story” and copious research coupled with vivid and dramatic writing that have made his books so popular across the world. As a narrative historian, he is determined to leave no stone unturned in his quest to get as much detail as he can on the subject he is writing about. And if it means travelling across the world to some of the most dangerous places, then so be it. (By Anand Raj OK, Features Editor, Friday Magazine Published: 00:00 March 1, 2013Friday)

In his creative writing Dalrymple models his stance on many predecessors whom he considers his role-models and under whose influence he has shaped his own creativity. He accepted that he is hugely influenced by Eric Newby, Patrick Leigh Fermor and Bruce Chatwin, among others, and is happy that “while there are people writing a lot of non-fiction, no one is doing this kind of stuff: narrative non-fiction/history. So, he says, “I am kind of a pioneer. And I’m not complaining”. When Anand Raj asks him about his future planning and projects on hand, Dalrymple

replies that he is considering a book on how Christianity arrived in India. “I’ve begun to do some research... I’m not sure where it will lead me,”

William Dalrymple has got the passion and versatility to work on the volatile issues sometime may be very sensitive and leading to ignite sparks of revolts and agitations, still, all this he manages to do with the knack of an expert through his hours of work in the libraries searching for the authentic sources, manuscripts in the archives and interviewing a number of people relentlessly. In his interview to Laaleen Khan (Published: October 15, 2011, International Express Tribune with the International New York Times), Dalrymple says, “My books break down into travel books, where I go on journeys and interview people, and history books, where I spend time most of the times with manuscripts in the library. It’s exciting to research both, but in different ways. With travel books you have the pleasure of the open road. With history books you’re following a trail like a detective. TV and travel journalism make a lovely change between the big projects, but they are much less substantial than books”. Commenting how he prepares the path way for his books and the process of his collecting materials, in his talks with Karim Waheed, the correspondent of The Daily Star, on the occasion of Hay Festival Dhaka 2014, Dalrymple explaining the question Why his history books read like novels?, says, “Because it's 'narrative history'. The narrative form is ancient whereas the novel form has developed much later. My writing process is like Chinese cooking; most of the time is invested in mise en place: chopping up ingredients, organising them, and at the very end when all the things are ready to go, you start the cooking. I write a book once every four or five years and most of that time goes into researching and preparing what exactly I'm going to write. I'd have over 400 pages of dateline... lots and lots of index cards. I'm a micro-planner. Clarity and control are very crucial if you're going to write about history” (Dalrymple. Interview with Karim Waheed).

In his article in MUMBAI BOSS, JULY 14, 2014, “How I Write”, William Dalrymple, discusses in detail his process of bringing out a book in the scheme of every four year.

I have two different routines depending on whether I’m writing a book or not. I write a book once every four-five years, and it normally takes the best part of a year to put the thing down on paper: the shortest was nine months for *Nine Lives*, the longest *From the Holy Mountain* which took 18 months.

Writing up one of these history books is like a final year of a four-year course in university. The first year is easiest and lightest, I’m going on book tours—

to Paris or Rome or Milan or America—doing lectures and readings on the previous book, and while I'm doing that I finalise what the next book is about. It's the least-hard working year, I'm popping into libraries, sending emails to other historians in the same fields. Year two is more secondary reading, so I'm reading all the stuff that has been put in previous books about what I'm writing about. Year three is about archives, sitting in Delhi National Archives or Lahore archive, or in Kabul, as I did for *Return of a King*.

During that time, I'm usually stuck in a library with nose in a laptop. I have a very highly tuned filing system which I've got down to an art. All the material has to be properly prepared and perfected. I liken book writing to Chinese cooking—the real effort is chopping up ingredients, all gingers in one pile, beets all marinated, so at the very end when all the things are ready to go, I put pan on heat and start the cooking. And if you're well prepared the cooking should go easily, and you should have it ready in nine months to a year.

During the research process which takes place in year two or three, I have a very anal system. I have three or four card indexes, organised by name, place, and topic. I keep a dateline on my laptop with every event from the beginning of the story to the end. It usually starts at about four or five pages and by the time I start to write it's about 400 pages. In that is the key quotes boiled down and tightened up in neat little gobbets. It's a very slow process. A really good quote can go under topic and place and show up in four different places, but it means when you're writing it, the quote is already there on your computer, ready to be cut and pasted. If you can write at speed, then that's the key. If everything is planned out and the order is clear then you don't end up with writer's block and you get a book written in a year or less.

The final year is completely different from the others. I stop going out much, and never go out to lunch. In that year, I get up at 5.30am. I will prop up a print-out of the chapter I'm working on besides my bed, and when I wake I'll go out on the terrace however hot the season, fresh from sleep, my mind awake, and I will reread the chapter up to the point I'm at, and make the corrections onto the print-out. It takes me about a month to write a single chapter and by the end of the month, everything at the beginning would have been sifted through about 30 times, re-edited every morning. I don't do what

novelists do which is thrash out a first draft and then go back to it to revise. I'll be revising the whole chapter every morning, which is why I get up so early.

Then again in this final year, I will have my corrections put in the computer, then go for a run and have breakfast, answer urgent emails at that point, then hopefully by about 9.30am I'm writing new material, which I do until about 2 pm when I have a late lunch. I stop then, and that's the point that I start worrying about laundry, where you're going out for a dinner, all normal paraphernalia of everyday life. I go back to do a final edit and research for the next day in the afternoon at 4 or 6, when the next day's writing gets planned. Then just before dinner I'll do a print-out and put it by my bed. After dinner, I rarely go out, I collapse by the telly, watching *24* or *The Bridge* or *The Killing*. Often I'll fall asleep during it, especially if I've been awake since 5.30am, and I'll be kicked awake by my children for snoring.

There are two key things during this time—I work in the shed at the end of the garden where there's no wifi. You mustn't have wifi, because as soon as you're online you can eat up two hours in a trice.

In the final year I go from a rambling individual to almost autocratically, fixatedly hardworking and focused and that is the one discipline of being a writer. One year in four or five you are completely eaten up by the book. If it's working, you're really dreaming it, it's not a figure of speech, it's a literal thing. You're harnessing the power of your subconscious.

The second key thing is to extend the morning as long as possible, I put my Blackberry in a draw and lock it, I do not look at emails. You live in that book for four hours.

The other thing I do is that I have a writing path, behind the shed at the back of my Delhi farm, where the goats graze. Around the goat's grazing area is what my children call the goataway. It's a path cut through high grass, which is my walking path. When I'm stuck with a passage I'll go round and round. For a big problem it's ten rounds, for a small to medium problem it's five or six rounds. That's my thinking path and that's a very important part of my

creative process, I go without a notepad, when it comes to me I'll rush off to my desk.

In summer in April/May, I often have a little siesta after lunch. And in summer, if I'm writing well, I have a pool near the shed, and I'll celebrate the passing of a page with a dip in the pool, it acts like a great lure for getting on with it.

It's easier with the history books, as it's clear where you're going. The thing I find most difficult as a writer is knowing what to do next. If you have a clear plot, like say British invasion of Afghanistan, one foot goes in front of the other. Travel writing is much less clear—with *Nine Lives* I wasn't entirely clear what I was after until I found it.

I'm very easily led astray by temptation. But nonetheless in my writing year—the last one was 2012, when I did *Return of a King*; I started in May and finished the following April—during that time I'm really super disciplined. You stop going to parties, I diet at the same time, the rules change.

The other key rule is no drinking at all until the pen is down, at dinner. If you drink you often write lots, but you read it the next day and it's often complete rubbish. I find a couple of sips of wine, and the quality just goes out the window immediately.

My writing desk in the shed is immaculate, organised with paperclips in the right place, books lined up like soldiers in a parade. I have some small fragments of Timurid tiles I found lying abandoned in Herat lying scattered around abandoned near a minefield, which act as paperweights.

The writing is mostly done on a laptop, but I take notes in notebooks, and I get them and my card indexes and files from Sara Stationers on Chiswick High Road [in London]. I always use the same notebook, it's part of the superstition. I also always use the same size card index, and when my books overlap I can use the same card indexes. So if I'm writing about Nadir Shah for my next book then I already have index cards about him from *City of Djinnns*.

I have a white cockatoo Albinia. Albinia is my companion for my writing and she sits with me. She's a very noisy, boisterous bird and she loves dancing and music and conversation. But she has a weird second sense when I get down to writing, and she keeps completely silent until I'm done. (Dalrymple "How I Write")

As for his next book on hand, William talks to the interviewers and in his columns in the various print media. In one talk with Jennifer Cox, on 09 July 2014, William gives a rough plan for his next project to Cox's query what will be next after his three history book, "I read a wonderful book last year called Natasha's Dance – a cultural history of Russia – and in a single volume the author managed to get an incredible amount of his reading about Russian art, literature, cinema, all in one coherent frame. If I can find a way to do something similar: a big cultural history of India – a narrative that pulled the strands together – that's what I'd love to do next". But by November 2014, the plans have acquired a concrete form. Things in mind have got clear shapings. At present, Dalrymple is researching for his next book, *The Anarchy* which traces the growth of the East India Company from between 1756 to 1803. "I am working on the book which chronicles the feats of the East India Company that started off from a private trade company and became a colonial power," he told DNA. "The book will take at least another three to four years to be published" (Porecha, Maitri. *A World Gone By Through the Eyes of William Dalrymple*).



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