



## William Dalrymple Is a Travel Writer in *City Of Djinn*s

Mr.Punyashil S. Tembhurne

Assist. Professor Dept. of English, Late N. P. Waghaye Arts, Comm. & Sci.College  
Lakhani, Dist. Bhandara. Pin Code 441804

Corresponding Author- Mr.Punyashil S. Tembhurne

DOI- 10.5281/zenodo.8265381

### Abstract:

William Dalrymple's second book entitled "City of Djinn: A Year in Delhi" (1993), which bagged the prestigious "Thomas Cook Travel Book Award and the Sunday Times Young British Writer of the Year Award" in 1994. As suggested in the title, the text is based on the city rather than a journey-based travel literature. The experiences and stories that Dalrymple expresses about the city of Delhi and his encounters there regularly shift into the realm of history. In specific, the text is related with the historical (and continuing) association between Britain and India. The ways in which this association is exemplified, vary throughout City of Djinn, but an optimistic, touchy view of the British imperial endeavor remains perpetual. The numerous avenues that City of Djinn undertakes to progress this conservative demonstration of India and its historical past are scrutinized throughout the chapter. Especially among these is ardent Orientalising tendency, particularly apparent in the preoccupation of text with gendered and sexualised accounts of courts of Mughal, dancing girls, decadence and courtesans. "City of Djinn" employs portrayals of the different forms of architecture of Delhi to emphasize specific aspects of populations of the city, past and present, with an attention on Mughal and British colonial frameworks.

**Keywords:** Cultural Customs, Historical places, varied people, surroundings.

William Dalrymple enjoys his time in Delhi along with one of a variety of companions: his wife, Olivia, or different locals like Persian scholar "Dr Jaffery" or taxi-driver "Balvinder Singh". Basically, this literature is about settling in and discovering a city—anecdotes about William and Olivia's living style, their landlady, and her family are common. Taking in contrast with the nostalgic imperial adventure method of "In Xanadu", this is an account of William as a delayed settler colonist William Dalrymple is one of the prominent travel-writer who recreates the fascinating dissection of the history of Delhi by composing the picaresque travel narrative namely "City of Djinn" published in the year 1993. For readers, the book re-creates the episodes from recent past in the history of city of Delhi, Praising about the book Nicholas Wordsworth writes,

' A sympathetic and engaging portrait of the age-old city....

Pursuing his research through the narrow alleys, mosques,

Abandoned ruins and tombs of Delhi, Dalrymple encounters a range of folk who continue to give Delhi its special character. Pigeon fanciers, Sufi mystics, Moslem healers, musicians, calligraphers, Philosophers and a guild of eunuchs all provides Dalrymple with entertaining insights...

Narrator exemplifies Delhi as a heart of India and symbolize the identity of India at large. The book also revives the historical occurrences of the remote past. Dalrymple makes an in-depth survey about past and present of the history of Delhi city. His experiences of stay and research of the historic city of Delhi recorded in "City of Djinn". Dalrymple visited the city along with his wife Olivia Fraser, when he was newly married. In the introductory part of the book, Dalrymple eulogizes the exceptional feature of this city, which is the superiority of emerging back to survive from its own ashes just like a 'phoenix bird'. Delhi has been pictured as a phoenix-city which

never get annihilated and re-shapes itself after each stroke of devastation. Here it appears that William Dalrymple is reverberating the Huma Yaqub sentimentalities of Ahmed Ali –the narrator who eternalized the city of Delhi in his creation “Twilight in Delhi” – who even catches allusion in his book “City of Djinns”. Both William Dalrymple and Ahmed Ali highlight the use of themes of decadence and devastation so as to explore the city of Delhi:

Yet ruin has descended upon its monuments and buildings, upon its boulevards and by-lanes under the tired and dim stars the city looks deathly and dark the kerosene lamps no doubt light its streets and lanes; but they are not enough, as are not enough the markets and the gardens, to revive the light that floated on the waters of the Jamuna or dwelt in the heart of the city. Like a beaten dog it has curled its tail between its legs, and lies lifeless in the night as an acknowledgment of defeat.

(Twilight in Delhi 5-6)

Both the authors tactically highlight the theme of nostalgia but in a different way--William Dalrymple is celebrating the colonial past of the city of Delhi, Ali on the other side, considers the British accountable for the premature devastation of the city. The novel “City of Djinns” swings freely from the present to the past and from individual experiences to that of historical, traditional and mythical. The introductory part provides an overview of coming events and also throws light for the reader to gather information about the title of the novel. Dalrymple records his meeting with the “Sufi Pir Sadr-ud-Din” who considers the city of Delhi as the “City of Djinns” and it is only due to the love of the djinns for this historic city that it can never be isolated. “Sufi Pir Sadr-ud-Din” further notifies him that one can still experience the existence of the djinns prevailing in the city. As a matter of fact, the story of this novel traces a backward tour in the history and culture of the city of Delhi – an entry into the Orient with saga of Sufi’s and Djinns, immoral rulers enjoying their harems and courtesans; pretty Oriental ladies and battles of partridges. Delhi has been depicted as a city of heat and dust, a place which has been developed and refined by 40 the British rule. William Dalrymple terms it as a ‘city of contradictions’ and once

he institutes his attraction and his love for the same, he is in position to unearthed the city like an Orientalist:

Delhi, it seemed at first, was full of riches and horrors: it was a labyrinth, a city of palaces, an open gutter, filtered light through a filigree lattice, a landscape of domes, an anarchy, a press of people, a choke of fumes, a whif of spices. (7-8)

Having taken into consideration the vague and illogical part of travel and celebrity culture; Robert Clarke notes:

Modern Western travel culture, like celebrity, it could be said, has played a dubious role in the development of capitalist democratic cultures, as a force and symbol of enfranchisement and liberation, on the one hand, and equally of containment and exploitation, on the other In recent scholarship, travel has been figured either as oppressive and colonizing, or as a force for disruption, shybridity and liberation (145)

It was exactly this ability for judgment that marks “City of Djinns” such a somber, witty treat. At the age of 24, when William Dalrymple landed in Delhi in 1989, he realized that the city full of people lamenting over their pasts—although quite different pasts. He narrated touchingly about the Punjabis, who had been homeless by the tragedy of partition; the Anglo-Indians, still upset by the loss of the empire; and the Muslim- community, who realized their once-proud culture had suffered irreversible decline. Moreover, he promptly exposed that these people hated each another to death. At an escape from these sections, who were engrossed bickering over the dreadful corpse of 93 modern Delhi, lay peace-loving Sufi’s of India and the figures of the British-Rule who had gone native in the 18 th century, embracing Indian costumes, language-style, religious practices, and wives—personalities like Kirkpatrick, the subject of the book “White Mughals”, who had shortly brought each and everything together before it fell apart once again. It was in such figures, looking for a multi-cultural concept, that William Dalrymple realized a reflection of. Dalrymple describes the culture of Delhi as :

Typical of his account is the picture he gives of the festival Held at the great Sufi shrine of the Qadam Sharif,

which sheltered the supposed Footprint of the of the Holy Prophet. 'Every Thursday the courtyard of the Darga is so full Of visitors that it is difficult even to approach the Place and touch it,' he writes. 'Pilgrims and ascetics come from countries and cities far and near to seek the fulfilment of their desires.'(166)

Most of the times the city of Delhi had confronted this brutality and presently in the 21 st century, it is the New Delhi equipped with its metro and all modern amenities as compensation to what it had sacrificed and suffered in the past. Though, an attempt has been made in the analysis to establish that Delhi is changing itself in every phase and so, it justifies its status as the capital city of India. It is a genuine archetypal of cultural and religious diversity prevailing India, consequently arising interest of all to probe into it. There is a general perception that the native rulers and the British engaged in confrontation with each other. But Dalrymple through the book , seeks to prove that they shared a very warm relationship. He seeks to bust the stereotype image of the Englishman in India. Film and most TV dramas have tended to present the Englishman as an 'Imperialist Incarnate: the narrow-minded, ramrod-backed sahib in a sola topee and bristling moustache, dressing for dinner despite the heat, while raising a disdainful nose at both the people and the culture of India'(10).

#### Conclusion:

William Dalrymple has employed the short story framework to represent the multi-coloured, multi-faceted and widely misunderstood but magical fabric that constitutes India. The *dissimilarities* of language, food, cultural history and religions prevailed everywhere only strengthened the sentiment of unity of our people by the way people of India accommodate the dissimilarities and happily survive with each other in every circumstances. Dalrymple minute observations about people and traditions of India positions with the very splendid travel writings.

#### References:

1. Dalrymple, William, City of Djinn: A Year in Delhi. 1993. New Delhi: Penguin 2004.
2. Tembhurne, Punyashil. Langlit, An International Peer Reviewed open Access Journal . November 2016 www.langlit.org
3. Dorgelo, Rebecca. *Travelling into History: The travel writing and narrative History of William Dalrymple*. Phd Thesis, University of Tasmania, July 2011.Web.
4. Tembhurne, Punyashil. *Representation of Nizam's Contemporary Culture of Hyderabad in White Mughals*, Social Issues and Problems, A Half yearly Peer Reviewed Multidisciplinary National Research Journal of Socisl Science & Humanities. December 2016