



## TRAVELOGUE – THE LITERARY EXPOSITION OF TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to explore the classical literature that captures themes of sea voyages as a source of the unknown and of self-knowledge. We read stories that follow the spirit of colonialism that haunts shipboard tales and the shipwrecked. Against this classical literature, it studied the chronicles of pirates and single-handed sailors and the narrative of voyaging. It has explored from both a literary perspective concerned with imagining and experiencing the sea and a cultural studies context that works to situate the literary in histories of slavery, colonialism, piracy and migrations by sea. In this weaving together of literature and essays try to explore how sea going voyages shape history, cultures and themselves. The field component of this paper includes exploring the 'culture of sea ports' and creating visual presentations of local maritime culture. The people in Europe developed a love for discovery of the world during the Renaissance period. They were also interested in the discovery of man. From the early sixteenth century people from Europe started undertaking voyages and also produced what can be termed as "New literature of the sea". The spirit of discovery and commercial enterprise received great stimulus. There was an eager desire to learn more, both, of things at home and of the new lands. Enterprising merchants and seamen were making inroads into faraway lands. New discoveries were encouraged. The formation of the Royal Society indicates a new found desire for discovery and invention. Scientists like Copernicus came out with astounding new discovering and theories. A wonder thirst overtook the European subcontinent.

**Keywords** – travel writing, voyages, imagining, colonialism, migration, self-experience visual presentations.

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### INTRODUCTION

Narratives of pilgrimages and crusades can be found dating back to the times when the foundation of England was being laid. Even in those early times the known world was being widened

through discovery. Writer Hakluyt included in his "*The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation*", the legendary conquests of Author. The earliest of literature deals with accounts of travel undertaken by undaunted spirits like that

of Beowulf and of Adelard. The journey undertaken by Marco Polo aroused interest in the study of Geography in England towards the end of the thirteenth century. When early prose was written the travels recorded by the Madeville translators were very popular.

The pioneers in exploration were not Britishers but people from Spain, Italy and Portugal. A serious recording of voyages also began in Spain and Italy. The early accounts of the voyages undertaken by these adventurous souls were written in a simple, plain and direct style. Richard Hakluyt, who wrote in the early sixteenth century, was interested about ways of plantation and also about navigation and voyages. This was a period when great works appeared in the field of drama and poetry. One finds a persistent call o the sea in these impacts of literature and real life. A writer of this period, Richard Eden has an important place in the literature of English navigation and discovery. He wanted to bring to the notice of his own countrymen the great achievements made by the Portuguese and Spaniards. He wanted to encourage his own countrymen to the adventurous. He published a book titled "The Art of Navigation", to guide his countrymen. He also translated from Latin a treatise which is an account of New India and other new found lands and islands with description large lands and islands found in West Ocean. Hakluyt also translated certain travel accounts from Latin into English.

Later on, seamen wrote their own accounts of the voyages undertaken by them. John Hawkins wrote an account of his voyage 'A True Declaration of the Troublesome Voyages of Mr. John Hawkins to the part of Guinea and the West Indies in the years of our Lord 1567 and 1568.' Another voyage account 'Discourse of a Discoverie for a New Passage to Cataia' was written by Sir Humphrey Gilbert. These books on travelling are real accounts of the experiences of their authors.

#### **Travel Writing of Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century**

By the beginning the seventeenth century, many such accounts had made their appearance. We find several references to sea voyages and cannibals and strange men in the plays of

Shakespeare. Shakespeare makes use of the literature on voyages which was available in his age and the characters of seamen in his works speak with profound knowledge of the sea. He used the information given in the sea chronicles of the time. Shakespeare's characters often speak with profound knowledge of the sea. Without this information he would not have succeeded in writing the vivid description we find in his plays like "The Tempest", and "Pericles".

*"And of the cannibals that each other eat,  
And authropophagi, and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders."*

Spencer, in his "Faerie Queene" upholds the claim of the voyager to 'advize' others.

*"But let that man with better sense advize,  
That of the world least pat to us is red;  
And daily how through hardly enterprise  
Many great regions are discovered,  
Which to late age were never mentioned,  
Who ever heard of th' 'Indian Peru?'  
Or who in venturous vessel measured  
The Amazon huge river, now found trew?  
Or fruitfulest Virginia who did ever vew?"*

People from England reached different parts of the world such as Japan, Australia and Madagascar. In this period books on enterprises of Englishmen on sea were written and risks involved in seafaring were brought to the notice of the readers. Books like 'The Strange and Dangerous Voyages of Captain Thomas James in his Intended Discovery of the North West Passage into the South Sea' (1633) indicate the conflict between the traditional and scientific attitude. It was made clear that seamen needed special knowledge and training. In his book on seafaring Nathaniel Boteler deals with various aspects of seafaring – parts of a ship, choice of best ship and the signal sailing, chasing and fighting ships of wars etc. The literature of piracy also occupies place of its own.

William Dampier, sailor, logwood cutter, buccaneer or pirate privateer and explorer has written one of the earliest and most interesting accounts of voyages undertaken. He travelled extensively and in various capacities. He was a pirate for some years and also a commander of an exploring expedition to New Holland. He had an

unquenchable wander, lust and has described sea coasts, people, plants and animals he came across. His observations on peoples, customs and trade have great historical value. The following is a description of the Indians working under Spaniard. The description reflects his keen observation and ability to empathic with these sufferers as can be inferred from the passage given below.

*'All the Indian that I have been acquainted with who are under the Spaniards that are free; and at these public meetings when they are in the greatest of their jollity, their mirth seems to be rather forced than real. Their songs are very melancholy and doleful, so are their music, but whether it be natural to the Indians slavery, I am not certain. But I have always been prone to believe that they are then only condoling their misfortunes, the loss of their countries and liberties, while although those that are now living do not know nor remember what it was to be free, yet there seems to be a deep impression in their thoughts them under, increased probably by some tradition of their ancient freedom.'*

William Dampier has described the Indians who were made slaves by the Spaniards. He feels that the Indians feel sad because they are no longer free. He feels that though they have themselves never been free yet they do have some understanding of the concept of freedom.

Another traveler who has left a detailed account of his observation during his voyages was a man called Captain Wooden Rogers. Rogers has described his voyage into the South Pacific and what he saw in various towns and cities he toured. Interestingly, in one of his description he talks about 'Alexander Selkirk' whose journey accounts inspired Defoe to write is famous 'Robinson Crusoe'. The following passage is a description of the life of Selkirk who was forced to live alone on an island.

*"A man clothed in goat-skin, who seemed wilder than the original owners of his apparel. His name was Alexander Selkirk, a Scotsman, who....had lived alone on the island for four years and four months....he had with him his clothes and bedding, with a firelock and some powder and bullets, some tobacco, a knife, a kettle, a Bible, with some other books and his mathematical implements. He diverted himself and provided for his sustenance as*

*well as he could; but had much ado to bear up against melancholy for the first eight months and was sore distressed at being left alone in such a desolate place. He built himself two huts.....thatched with long grass and lined with goat skins.... He employed himself in reading, praying and singing psalms, so that he said he was a better Christian during his solitude than he had ever been before....."*

Captain Wooden Rogers has described the life led by Alexander Selkirk on an island all by himself. He had to make do with the barest of necessities. He was forced to wear goatskin and live in a hut. The passage tells us how his religious belief and knowledge helped him survive during this difficult period in his life.

The reader can gather a clear idea of how challenging and perilous sea voyaging was in those days. Later on the theme of an isolated existence on a lonely island was used by Defoe in his book 'Robinson Crusoe'. Defoe is said to have used the information available in Selkirk's record. However sea voyaging had its own rewards. An account of the voyage around the world undertaken by Lord Anson tells us that it took him three years and nine months to go around the world. He returned with a treasure laden ship along with a number of interesting experiences.

There were other voyages like John Byron and James Cook who undertook voyages and have left behind narratives and journals. Cook undertook three voyages out of which one was to the South Pole and another to the Northern Hemisphere. He has faithfully narrated his experiences during these voyages. His third narrative is about countries visited and particularly about Spanish settlements in California. This narrative was published by his brother and contains picturesque observations. Along with these narratives voyage accounts to the Arctic and Antarctic region are also available.

#### **The Eighteenth Century travels writers**

In the eighteenth century extensive land travel was undertaken and documented. The travel accounts of this century are store houses of information and served an important function in those days. James Bruce and E. D. Clarke travelled Eastwards and have narrated in detail the strange events and experiences they came across. These

narrators enriched the institutions of knowledge with the valuable information they gathered. The nineteenth century travel books show an influence of the popular thought of that period. The proper study of mankind is man. These books do not deal so much with monuments, museums, churches and institutions as they do with men and women in relation to their surroundings. There are several accounts of travelers going to South America and writing about life in that part of the world. One of the finest examples of such writing is Darwin's account of the "Beagle". It is noteworthy because of its place in the history of science and also a picturesque and readable record of travel.

Gradually these narratives ceased to be mere factual accounts of what was seen and heard and experienced in alien countries. The narrators started using and including imaginary episodes and dialogues in their writings. One such outstanding narration is by Kinglake who wrote about his journey from Belgrade to Constantinople, then to Smyrna, by sea to Cyprus and Bagrout from where he rode through Palestine and across the desert of Cairo to Damaskus and Anatolia. In his book titled 'Eothen' he includes imaginary conversation between people and certain reminiscences of childhood.

Till the end of the nineteenth century travel accounts continued to be written. Among several others the most outstanding was George Burrow. He has extraordinary linguistic ability. His love for gypsy life, humour, sentiment, graphic observation, satire, erudition and romance mingle in his books. The basic ingredient is a love of the open road and 'the wind on the health'. His books are not very well written documents but they appeal to the lovers of the picaresque.

#### **Some Great Travel Fiction in Literature**

The books of travels to almost all parts of the world – East, West, North and South made a lasting impact on English poetry and Prose. Almost all poets from Wordsworth to Tennyson and Browning have left some account or impression of their travels upon their pages. One comes across sketches of travels in the writings of eminent novelists from Fielding to Stevenson. Books on travel and books inspired by travel have enjoyed

popularity which can find a parallel only in the case of novels.

Tales of travels captivated the mind of English men. Daniel Defoe was an avid reader of travel accounts and his own writings are based on these. He made use of Hakluyt's 'Voyages', Dampier's 'New Voyages Round the World', Robert Knox's 'Historical Relation of Ceylon' and similar works. He narrates the adventures of his heroes and heroines as in Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack. His 'Robinson Crusoe' appeals to people because of its imaginative value – the way the writer creates a new situation in an entirely new world – the desert island and the shipwrecked mariner, utterly alone. Defoe has written with great intuition about the difficulties and frustrations that a man in Crusoe's position would be forced to face. Defoe also indulges in glorification of the English spirit as a Spaniard who compliments Crusoe on the way in which he had struggled with his presence of mind in their distress than any people that ever he met with. Defoe, in his works dreamt of gay highwaymen, of pirates and of little children who were pickpockets, of silent plague stricken streets of London, of ship wrecks and desert islands – all of which indicate his deep interest in the literature of travel.

Novelists like Richardson and Fielding who chose to write after the seventeen forties chose to let their novels pass as histories or biographies. They decided to learn from epics and followed the epic style in their narratives. Travel is therefore a recurring motif in their works. Richardson's use of the epistolary method of narrative becomes possible because the heroine is on the run trying to evade the amorous advances of her master.

Fielding also tried to maintain a true resemblance to things as they were even in the titles of his books such as "The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his friend Mr. Abraham Adams", "Clarissa" or "The History of a Young Lady", "The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling". In writing Joseph Andrews, Fielding professes to be writing 'the comic epic in prose'. His characters of epics are of inferior rank and manners. Joseph Andrews consists of a series of separate adventures which are independent of each other. Fielding used the

picaresque form of novel writing. In these novels the hero was generally a social parasite – a rascal much like Moll Flanders of Defoe's novel of the same title. The narration generally deals with the adventures of this picaresque.

Fielding's 'Joseph Andrews' consists of a series of separate adventures which are detached and independent of each other. Joseph Andrews, the hero incurs the wrath of Lady Broby who makes amorous advances towards the handsome footman Joseph. The novel is about the adventures of Joseph in finding his way home and the hardships that befall him on the way. The role of Joseph Andrews is more or less of a modern Don Quixote who is himself honest, upright and good but is entirely ignorant of the ways of this world. He expects on every hand an honesty and undesigned Christian behavior. He is therefore constantly the victim of deceit. He sometimes hits back and delivers blows with his fists. He moves from place to place. He has fights in inns and midnight tussles.

Joseph is constantly on the move and meets several people on the way. The author gets a chance to describe people and their ways. While most of the men and women we meet in Joseph Andrews are worse than they seem, others are better. It is often those who are poor and without resources such as peddlers and chambermaids that help others who are in trouble or need.

The hero of Fielding's "Tom Jones", also finds himself on the high road. This is in keeping with the epic tradition of its having a beginning, middle and an end. The beginning deals with the causes of the action and in that we have a conflict between the hero's design and the designs of his opposers. The first six books of "Tom Jones" tell us about Tom's character and the evil designs of the villains who wish to prevent his marriage with an heiress. So Tom has to turn away from his house. The high road leads to London. In Tom Jones just as in Joseph Andrews the high road and the inn provide a suitable scene for the testing of character, the recognition of bad nature masquerading as good and of good nature concealed or tainted by imprudence. Tom has something to learn from every character he meets. In London misfortunes befall this good but imprudent hero till his true parentage

is discovered. Tom is of noble parentage and an heir and in the end virtue and goodness is rewarded.

It is not surprising that the travel motif recurs in the works of Fielding, for the last book written by him and published posthumously is "A Journal of a Voyage through Lisbon". The fact that Fielding undertook to write such an account indicates his interest in travel literature. About the existing travel literature of his time Fielding opined that travelers seemed to have fallen either into the fault of filling their pages with adventures which nobody could possibly have seen or experienced.

Several other writers after Richardson and Fielding have used the motif of travel in their novels. But this motif was most effectively used by Jonathan Swift who born in Dublin on November 30, 1667. His famous book "Gulliver Travels" was published in 1726. Swift was writing in a period when several travelogues had already made their appearance. Daniel Defoe had combined fact and fiction in his novel "Robinson Crusoe". Swift used his knowledge of travels to create fictitious places and countries. He imagined situations involving people and animals. Swift was a satirist. "Gulliver's Travels" is a parable which appeals to both child and to the grown-ups. The narration is pseudo realistic. It is simple and direct. Swift believed in using the right word and in the right place. Swift's importance in the history of English literature is due to his style and to his position as the pioneer in a new province of prose composition. He infused a new life in literature writing. For the time he started writing every branch of original writing except comedy seemed to be dying or dead. This might have been due to the influence of science and scientific thinking on the minds of writers.

The complete work "Gulliver's Travels" comprises of four voyages undertaken by Gulliver. Swift was very fond of reading books of travel. He was also interested in geographical discoveries and theories. It cannot be doubted that Swift had read Travelers' Tales written by several writers and was impressed by the burlesque element in them. Swift undoubtedly borrowed some ideas from this account.

One important feature of "Gulliver's Travels" is that it does not sound improbable. Our powers of



belief are not strained once we accept the tiny and enormous human beings. The tone of the narration is matter of fact and there is great consistency of detail. The following extract which is the beginning of "Gulliver's Travels", will show quite clearly how Swift made his narrative sound most realistic.

*My father has a small estate in Nottinghamshire; I was the third of five sons. He sent me to Emmanuel college in Cambridge at fourteen years, old where I resided three years, and applied myself close to my studies, but the charge of maintain me (although I had a very scanty allowance) being too great for a narrow fortune, I was bound apprentice to Mr. James Bates and an eminent surgeon in London, with whom I continued four years; and my father now and then sending me small sums of money. I laid them out in learning navigation and other parts of the mathematics useful to those who intend to travel, as I always believed it would become time my fortune to do. When I left Mr. Bates, I went down to my father where, by the assistance of him and my uncle John and some other relations, I got forty pounds, and a promise of thirty pounds a year to maintain me at Leyden; there I studied physics two years and seven months, knowing it would be useful in long voyages.....*

*But my good master Bates dying in two years after and I having few friends my business began to fail, for my conscience would not suffer me to imitate the bad practice of too many among my brethren. Having therefore consulted with my wife and some of my acquaintance, I determined to go to sea. I was surgeon successively in two ships, and made several voyages for six years to the East and West Indies, by which I got some addition to my fortune. My hours of leisure, I spent in reading the best authors, ancient and modern, being always provided with a good numbers of books, and when I was ashore in observing the manners and dispositions of the people, as well as learning their language, wherein I had a great facility by the strength of my memory.*

The above passage reflects Swift's ability to think of every relevant detail and include it in his narrative. He sets the atmosphere in which the reader's expectations are aroused. The reader is

made aware of the protagonists wander lust and desire for adventure. The protagonist is shown to be making conscious effort to master the art of voyaging. The extract also informs the readers about the economic and other advantages of working on a ship. It reflects the general impression of people of that period regarding travelling and undertaking sea voyages. Travelling provided an excellent opportunity to meet people from other parts of the world, to know their cultures and to learn their languages.

Swift does not allow his narrative to grow long and monotonous. In the very fifth paragraph of the first part of "Gulliver's Travels" the ship gets caught in a sea storm and soon afterwards is driven upon a rock in the sea which results in its splitting. Gulliver ultimately finds himself alone on the shore where he goes off to sleep and on waking up comforts the little Lilliputians who manage to tie him down and take him their captive.

In the second voyage Gulliver's experience stand in contrast to his experience in Lilliput.

*"On the 16<sup>th</sup> day of June 1703 we came in full view of a great island or continent (for we knew not whither) on the south side where of was a small neck of land jutting out into the sea, and a creek too shallow to hold a ship of above one hundred tons. We cast anchor within a league of this creek, and our captain sent a dozen of his men well armed in the long-boat, with vessels for water if any could be found. I desired his leave to go with them that I might see the country and make what discoveries I could. When we came to land, we saw no river or spring nor any sign of inhabitants. Our men therefore wandered on the shore to find out some fresh water near the sea, and I walked alone about a mile on the other side, where I observed the country all barren and rocky.*

*I now began to be weary and seeing nothing to entertain my curiosity, I returned gently towards the creek and the sea being full in my view, I saw our men already got into the boat, and rowing for life to the ship. I was going to halloo after them, although it had been to little purpose, when I observed a huge creature walking after them in the sea as fast as he could, he waded not much deeper than his knees, and took prodigious strides, but our*

men had the start of him half a league and the sea there about being full of sharp pointed rocks, the monster was not able to overtake the boat.”

The above extract is from Gulliver's voyage to Brobdingnag. In this place the people are gigantic in size in contrast to the tiny Lilliputians. The nine-year old daughter of Gulliver's mistress in Brobdingnag is 'not above forty feet high'. Swift's aim in writing these tales can be expressed in his own words which he uses to express the observations of the prince of Brobdingnag – 'how contemptible a thing was human grandeur, which could be mimicked by such diminutive insects as' and get' said he, "I dare engage these creatures have their titles and distinctions of honour, they contrive little nests and burrows that they call houses and cities, they make a figure in dress and equipage, they love, they fight, they dispute, they cheat, they betray."

#### Conclusion

The travel motif, as has already been pointed out was used by Richardson and Fielding after Swift used it so skillfully. We find a recurrence of it in romance literature and even in the literature produced in the Victorian period. These accounts fired the imagination of writers like Defoe and Swift. Defoe and Swift used the information they got in various travel accounts to comment on the behavior of people in the society. In several novels written in this period and afterwards we find travel figuring as a motif. The political social and literary developments in France and Germany also affected the literature which was written in England. Many American novels have travel as their motif – notable among them are novels like 'Moby Dick' and 'Billy Budd'. The travel motif also later on became a symbol for a spiritual quest or an inward journey of the protagonist.

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