PGEG SI 04

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati-781017



SEMESTER 1

MA IN ENGLISH

COURSE 4: NONFICTIONAL PROSE

BLOCK 3: LETTERS AND TRAVEL WRITING

CONTENTS

Unit 11 : Keats' Letters: To Benjamin Bailey, 22 November, 1817
To John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May 1818

Unit 12: Eric Newby: *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* (Chapter IV "Pera Palace" and Chapter V "The Dying Nomad") [Part I]

Unit 13: Eric Newby: *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* (Chapter IV "Pera Palace" and Chapter V "The Dying Nomad") [Part II]

Unit 14: V.S. Naipaul: *An Area of Darkness* (Section I, Chapter I)

REFERENCES : For All Units

Subject Experts

Prof. Pona Mahanta, Former Head, Department of English, Dibrugarh University

Prof. Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami, Srimanta Sankardeva Chair, Tezpur University

Prof. Bibhash Choudhury, Department of English, Gauhati University

Course Coordinator : Dr. Prasenjit Das, Assistant Professor, Department of English, KKHSOU

SLM Preparation Team

Units	Contributors
11	Rimi Nath Research Scholar, Department of English, GU
12 & 13	Pallavi Gogoi Assistant professor, Department of English, KKHSOU
14	Dr. Merry Baruah Bora, Cotton College

Editorial Team

Content: Prof. Robin Goswami, Former Head, Department of English, Cotton College (Units 11, 12, 13)
In house Editing (Unit 14)

Structure, Format and Graphics: Dr. Prasenjit Das

May, 2017

ISBN : 978-81-934003-3-3

This Self Learning Material (SLM) of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State University is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike4.0 License (International) : http.//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0

Printed and published by Registrar on behalf of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University.

Headquarters: Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati-781017
City Office: Housefed Complex, Dispur, Guwahati-781006; Web: www.kkhsou.in

The University acknowledges with strength the financial support provided by the Distance Education Bureau, UGC for preparation of this material.

SEMESTER 1

MA IN ENGLISH

COURSE 3: NONFICTIONAL PROSE

BLOCK 3: LETTERS AND TRAVEL WRITING

DETAILED SYLLABUS

Unit 11 : Keats' Letters: To Benjamin Bailey, 22 November, 1817 **Page : 225- 242**
To John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May 1818
John Keats: The Letter Writer, Reading the Texts: Major Themes, Keats' Prose Style, Critical Reception

Unit 12 : Eric Newby: *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* (Chapter IV "Pera Palace" and Chapter V "The Dying Nomad") [Part I] **Page : 243- 254**
A Short History of Travel, Eric Newby: The Travel Writer, Brief Summary of the book

Unit 13 : Eric Newby: *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* (Chapter IV "Pera Palace" and Chapter V "The Dying Nomad") [Part II] **Page : 255- 271**
Reading Chapter IV: "Pera Palace", Reading Chapter V: "The Dying Nomad", Newby's Prose Style, Major Themes

Unit 14 : V.S. Naipaul: *An Area of Darkness* (Section I, Chapter I) **Page : 272- 293**
A Brief Account of Travel Writing, V.S. Naipaul: Life and Works, Reading the Chapter, Important Themes, Style and Language

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

This is the last Block of this Course. In this Block, the learners shall get an opportunity to read about Letters and Travel Writing. The primary function of **Letters** is to communicate. However, other than this, a letter often contains the writer's views and ideas about certain issues that form a common interest for both the writer and the reader. A letter can also throw useful focus on the writer's self and can help in understanding the work. John Keats, who has been prescribed for you in this programme, is one of those important writers whose letters to his friends and relatives contain his valuable meditations on various issues and concerns of his contemporary period including his views on poetry. Regarding the subject matter, a letter can be written on any subject. However, a well-written letter can be a useful tool to inform, direct or persuade. Although letters are not always regarded as a part of Nonfiction, a personal letter can sometimes throw very useful light on the character of the writer as well as on some issues of common interests. You have perhaps heard about the name of the book *Mahatma and The Poet* which is a collection of letters exchanged by two of the legendary figures of India—Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore on certain social and political issues before India's independence.

As J. A. Cuddon writes in his *Dictionary* letter writing has a long history. For example, the Latin rhetoricians made convenient distinction between the private letter (personalis) and the letter of affairs (negotialis). The third type of letter is the open or general letter addressed to an individual or a newspaper editor. Some manuals of letters survive from Classical times. In the middle Ages, there were a large number of manuals on the subject. Consequently, many medieval treatises on rhetoric can be seen as the 'guides' to letter writing. If you have read English Literature comprehensively, you must have encountered the name of Paston whose famous collection of Letters under the title *The Paston Letters* (1422 - 1509), deals with the correspondence of three generations of a Norfolk family. Other well-known collections of letters are those written by Mozart, Keats, Flaubert and Horace Walpole.

The letter, which is now discussed more as part of Life Writing, has been adapted and exploited in various ways as a form of writing since the 17th century. Significant examples from this period include Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* (1656-57), Montesquieu's *Letters Persanes* (1721), Voltaire's *Lettres Philosophiques* (1734), better known as *Lettres Anglaises*, Madame de Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Peruvienne* (1747) and Lady Mary Wortley Montague' *Turkish Letters* (1763) which gave an account of her travels in the Near East. In the 18th century, there could be seen such writers as Richardson and Smollett who in their Epistolary novels like *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1747-48) and *Humphry Clinker* (1771), exploited the use of letter form in the novels. However, in the same 18th century, letters served other purposes. Examples are: Bolingbroke's *Letter to Sir William Wyndham* (1717), a political polemic; Rousseau's Lettre a D'Alernbert sur les spectacles (1758), a controversial treatise on the morality of

drama; the *Letters of Junius*, a pseudonymous invective against individuals, and Edmund Burke's *A Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol* (1777), a political address.

Travel Writing, on the other hand, has emerged as a key area of research in the humanities and social sciences. If you like to travel a lot, you will readily agree that travel broadens the mind and perspectives, and the knowledge of distant places and people often confers on you a different status. Very often travellers sometimes return as changed human being or do not come back to his place of origin at all. Richard Hakluyt, the English editor of early travel writings, mainly discussed the history of travel in terms of eyewitness accounts of the travellers. However, it was gradually recognised that the real power of travel writing lay in its independence of perspective. The claim to have been there and to have seen with one's own eyes could enrich the written account. The academic disciplines as literature, history, geography and anthropology all have taken travel writing seriously and have produced a body of interdisciplinary criticism to appreciate the historical complexity of the genre. Let us have a quick look at the history of travel writing for a better understanding of the genre.

Travel writing has played an important role in recent years in the creation of an international literary field. You should note that writing and travel have always been intimately connected. The traveller's tale is as old as fiction itself. In the classical traditions, Homer's *Odysseus* that offers a blueprint for the romance, indirection, and danger of travel as well as the joy of homecoming, is an excellent example of travel narrative. Therefore, the ambiguous figure of Odysseus – adventurous, powerful, unreliable – is perhaps the appropriate archetype for any traveller and for the travel writer as well. It is interesting to find in the English Christian tradition that life itself is symbolised as an eternal journey. For example, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), produce much medieval travel writing. Thus in England, we find traces of travel writing since the 14th century. In many respects, pilgrims are the ancestors of modern day tourists. However, many of the themes and problems associated with modern travel writing can be traced in two medieval texts which still provoke fascination and controversy: one is Marco Polo's travel to Cathay (China) and the other is John Mandeville's *Travels,* which mark the beginnings of a new impulse in the late Middle Ages, which would transform the interest from traditional paradigms of pilgrimage to observed experience and curiosity towards other life ways. Although Christopher Columbus's first voyage to America in 1492 is usually seen as a new beginning for travel writing, you should note that Columbus was, as a writer, deeply influenced by both Mandeville and Marco Polo.

During the 16th century, writing became an essential part of travelling. Keeping important documents became an integral aspect of the activity. Moreover, the interest aroused by stories of faraway places was an important way of attracting investment. Rivalry between European nation-states meant that the

publication of travel accounts was often a semi-official business in which the beginnings of imperial histories were actually constructed. The greatest impact of the discovery of a new world like America on English writing in the early 16th century is seen in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), in which the fictional traveller, Raphael Hythloday, is said to have journeyed with Amerigo Vespucci to the New World. *Utopia* then became a model for subsequent travel writing like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which is more than anything else is a journey made to Belgium Congo. Similarly, for Francis Bacon, the travellers of the Renaissance had discovered a 'new continent' of truth, based on experience and observation which finally helped in the transmission of the new information which laid the foundations for the scientific and philosophical revolutions of the 17th century.

So, you have found that elements of travel writing are found in various texts of the bygone eras. We can also say that prose fictional writings in its modern form, has built its house on the motif of travel. For example, early modern European novels are full of traveller-protagonists such as Jack of Newberry, Lazarillo de Tormes, Don Quixote, and Robinson Crusoe. Daniel Defoe the author of *Robinson Crusoe* was skilled at exploiting the uncertain boundary between travel writing and the fiction. Travel writing and the novel, especially in its first-person form; have often shared a focus on the centrality of the individual, a concern with empirical details, and a movement through time and place, which is simply sequential. Interestingly, Defoe's own travel writing *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1726) offers a picture of the British kingdom, and influences modern tours such as Jonathan Raban's *Coasting* (1987) and Paul Theroux's *The Kingdom By the Sea* (1983).

The famous English biographer Samuel Johnson accompanied Boswell on a trip to the Scottish Highlands and Islands in the 1770s, with living memory of the final defeat of the Stuart rebellion at the Battle of Culloden. However, like many other travellers, Johnson and Boswell concluded that they had arrived too late, that change and decline were already advanced: 'A longer journey than to the Highlands must be taken by him whose curiosity pants for savage virtues and barbarous grandeur.' Modern tourist sites were being defined at this time, but travel was still for the rich and the hardy: it took ten days by coach from London to Edinburgh and a further week to get into the Highlands.

Peter Hulme, one of the editors of the *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, tells that the last significant shift in travel writing can be dated to the late 1970s and associated with a book like Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* (1977). *In Patagonia* appeared just a year before Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), usually seen as the beginning text for postcolonial studies (about which you will study in Semester IV). *Orientalism* was the first work of contemporary criticism to take travel writing as a major part of its corpus, taking it as a body of work which offered particular insight into the operation of colonial discourses. Scholars influenced by this book have begun to scrutinise relationships of culture and power found in the settings,

encounters, and representations of travel texts. Another interesting insight travel writing the principles developed in women's literary studies more generally, scholars have both rescued some women travel writers from obscurity and investigated the reasons for the popularity of others, mainly their male counterparts. The relationship between women as 'observers' and as 'observed' has come under serious scrutiny that is informed by critiques of ethnographic narratives, and the position of women travellers vis- a-vis colonialism is vigorously debated. Of late, you should see that Translation Studies has brought another dimension to travel, giving attention not only to translation between languages but also to translation between cultures. Perhaps, because of its surface resemblances to travel writing, most of the 20th century anthropologists emphasized its seriousness of purpose, its professional ethos, and its scientific method. However, anthropology's theoretical turn in the 1980s opened it towards other disciplines, with the idea of travel being central to that dialogue, especially in the work of James Clifford, whose book *Routes* takes a short travel account by Amitav Ghosh who is world famous for his travel book *In An Antique Land*. At the same time, anthropology discovered a more reflective and personal mode, which brought it closer to travel writing and thereby made an integral connection between Anthropology and Travel Writing.

The discussion on Letters and Travel Writing made above should make it clear that both Letters and travel writing has occupied a place of importance in the genre of non-fictional prose. All these forms together have made nonfictional prose a very popular form of writing vying for importance with fictional prose like novels and short stories.

Block 3 : Letters and Travel Writing comprises four units, which are as the following:

Unit 11: Keats' Letters deals with the form of letter writing through two letters written by John Keats – one to Benjamin Bailey, and the other, to John Hamilton Reynolds. The letters, which Keats wrote to his friends and family members, bear historical and literary significance, because it is through these letters that he formulated his ideas about the nature of Romantic art and imagination and aesthetic sensibilities.

Unit 12 and 13 introduce the learners to an exciting travel narrative by Eric Newby—*A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*. You all will agree that travel is really a very exciting experience. While introducing the learners to the history of travel in general, this unit shall help the learners to read and contextualise the significance of Eric Newby's *A Short Walk in The Hindu Kush* in that history of travel. A study of the two chapters from the book namely "Pera Palace" and "The Dying Nomad" deal with an uncomfortable road journey of the narrator as well the other multifarious experience that the narrator and his mates encountered during their travel.

Unit 14: V.S. Naipaul: *An Area of Darkness* (Section I, Chapter I) deals with V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* the first section of the first chapter of which has been prescribed for your study. It is we hope that from this unit, you will have a refreshing experience of Travel writing through the study of Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness.*

While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in "LET US KNOW" along with the text. We have kept "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. The hints for the answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books in the "FURTHER READING" list, which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred to in the preparation of the units have been added at the end of the block. As you know, the world of literature is too big and so we advise you not to take a unit to be an end in itself. Despite our attempts to make a unit self-contained, we advise that you should read the original texts of the writers as well as other additional materials for a thorough understanding of the contents of a particular unit.

UNIT 11: KEATS' LETTERS: TO BENJAMIN BAILEY, 22 NOVEMBER, 1817 TO JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS, 3 MAY 1818

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 John Keats: The Letter Writer

- 11.3.1 His Life
- 11.3.2 His Works

11.4 Reading the Texts

- 11.4.1 Major Themes
- 11.4.2 Keats' Prose Style

11.5 Critical Reception

11.6 Let us Sum up

11.7 Further Reading

11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

11.9 Possible Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss letter writing as an important component of nonfictional prose
- assess the importance Keats retains as a letter writer
- analyse Keats' prose style as exemplified in his letters
- discover Keats as a literary critic through your reading of the letters prescribed
- analyse why the letters of Keats are considered important documents for understanding the Romantic sensibility

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit intends to discuss the form of letter writing through two letters written by John Keats – one to Benjamin Bailey, and the other to John Hamilton Reynolds. John Keats needs no introduction to readers

because of his central position among the literary luminaries like Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley who contributed immensely to the Romantic Movement in English. Although John Keats had a short and eventful life and had correspondence with a wide circle of friends and relations, he borrowed much from a host of literary influences (Leigh Hunt, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Spenser, Dante, Milton, Boccaccio and Shakespeare among others) in his progress towards remarkable poetic achievements as a Romantic poet. The letters, which he wrote to his friends and family members, bear historical and literary significance, because it is through these letters that he formulated his ideas about the nature of Romantic art and imagination and aesthetic sensibilities. Besides, the letters has a strong bearing on his poetry. To understand and appreciate Keats' poetry in the right spirit, therefore, entails a serious perusal of his letters provide us with the contexts in which these verses were produced. However, you should also note that unlike Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley, Keats does not have a body of critical writing which would throw light on his poetic imagination. Keats' letters, therefore, gain tremendous significance because it is in these letters that we can see the poet's mind at work. Subsequently, letters have emerged as an important genre in non-fictional prose, although in recent times, this form has been marginalised. This unit will provide you with the resources that you will need for a contextual and critical reading of John Keats and his letters. From spring, 1817, there is a rich record of Keats' prolific and impressive skills as a letter writer. However, his letters were mostly published in between 1848 and 1878.

11.3 JOHN KEATS: THE LETTER WRITER

This section introduces you to the poet John Keats as a letter writer and brings up some of the main facts related to his life and works. The kind of man that John Keats was and the poetic life he had lived, are encased in the letters he had written during his lifetime. These letters provide the main source from which one can justly appreciate his poetry and personality. The letters



Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org

also form the mass of critical documents, which show the development of Keats' literary and philosophical ideas. He was writing freely and frankly to his kinsfolk and his friends, to his brothers and sister, to Shelley, Leigh Hunt, Haydon, Severn and others; and without restraint to the girl he passionately loved, Fanny Brawne. However, Keats evaded many aspects of his personal life in his letters, like his opinion about his parents. Due credit for gathering and arranging the information of Keats' correspondence goes to Harry Buxton and to Sir Sidney Colvin. Keats mixed in his letters the everyday events of his own life with a lively interest in those of his correspondents. He displayed wit and high spirits and expressed his profound thoughts on love, poetry and the nature of man. It is to be noted that through these letters Keats also revealed his personality, opinions and his mental states and so on. However, the poetic mode of thought is frequently the ruling mode in the prose fabric of these letters; and, thus, they become witness to the poetic imagination of this Romantic poet.



LET US KNOW

Form of the Personal Letter:

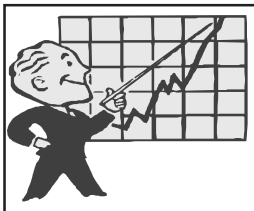
Personal letters are not usually regarded as a primary branch of literature like poetry, novel or drama. However, they can throw significant light on the theme, context and style of mainstream literary genre of a particular writer. An informal personal letter is remarkable for its authenticity and flexibility. Keats' close bonding with his family and friends had an impact on the quantity and kind of letters that he wrote. Many of his close friends were men of letters who influenced his ideas about poetry. Keats often used letters to clarify his views on poetry.

11.3.1 His Life

John Keats was born in London on 31 October 1795. His father, the manager of a livery stable in Moorfields, died when Keats was eight years old. His mother remarried, but she too died early of tuberculosis when Keats was fourteen. Keats remained deeply

attached to his brothers, George and Tom, and to his sister Fanny. He received his education at Clarke's school, Enfield, where he began a translation of the *Aeneid*. In 1810, Keats was apprenticed to an apothecary-surgeon. His first efforts at writing poetry appear to date from 1814. In 1815, Keats cancelled his fifth year of apprenticeship and became a student at Guy's Hospital. In 1816, Keats was licensed to practice as an apothecary, but in spite of precarious finances, Keats abandoned the profession for poetry. The literary world, however, did not receive Keats' poems with enough appreciation and enthusiasm. In the autumn came the first of Lockhart's harsh attacks on Keats' poems in *Blackwood's*, where he labelled Keats and his associates as members of the so-called Cockney school. These attacks disturbed Keats deeply. For the time being Keats concealed his pain and wrote to his brother, George, that in spite of the reviews he thinks that he will be among the English poets after his death. However, many of his friends believed that the wound was deep. Meanwhile, Keats' brother Tom was very ill, and during that time, Keats spent much time with him. When Tom died, Keats moved into his friend Brown's house in Hampstead, now known as Keats House. By September 1818, Keats met Fanny Brawne, with whom he fell deeply in love. During the course of the summer and autumn of 1818, his sore throats had become more persistent and more frequent. During this year, Keats was beset with financial problems, both his own and those of his friends and relations. However, Keats was intensely preoccupied with his love, Fanny, with whom he got engaged. Among other poets and writers, Wordsworth and Hazlitt had rendered much influence on Keats' thought and practice. With his friend, Charles Armitage Brown, Keats made a tour to the Lakes, spent some time in Scotland and briefly visited Northern Ireland. Although Keats had frequently travelled in southern England, he had never before seen such scenery of rugged grandeur. It moved him greatly, which found creative expression in *Hyperion*. In the winter of 1819, Keats became increasingly ill with

tuberculosis. Shelley invited Keats to Italy and after sorting out his copyrights and financial affairs, Keats set off for Italy with his friend Severn, in the vain hope for physical improvement, in September 1820. They did not visit Shelley but settled in Rome, where Keats died a few months later on 23rd February 1821 at the Piazza di Spagna. He was buried three days later in the city's English Cemetery.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Do you think Keats' sad and troubled life is responsible for the melancholy we witness in his poetry?

Q 2: Would you consider his letters important literary documents?

Q 3: How do the Letters written by Keats help the readers to understand the poet and his poetry?

11.3.2 His Works

Keats secured a rightful place in the line of English poets by dint of his works, within the limited time that life allotted him. In 1814, came out of Keats' pen, the "Imitation of Spenser", while "Ode to Apollo" and "Hymn to Apollo" were written in 1815. Keats' first published work is "O Solitude", which was published by Leigh Hunt in the *Examiner* in 1816. In the course of a survey of young poets in the same journal, Leigh Hunt included Keats' sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer". Keats met Shelley and Haydon began to plan *Endymion*. He wrote, "I stood tiptoe upon a little hill" as a first effort towards that poem. Keats' first volume of poems was published in March 1817. It included sonnets, epistles, and miscellaneous poems. *Endymion* was published in the spring of 1818, and it was dedicated to Chatterton, whom Keats greatly admired. Immediately after that appeared "Isabella, or The Pot of Basil". Bitter attacks on *Endymion* came from Lockhart in *Blackwood's* and from the *Quarterly Review*.

The period from September 1818 to September 1819, is known as the "Great year" of Keats' intense poetic creativity, as it is in this period that he began the mythological epic *Hyperion*. Consecutively, he wrote "The Eve of St Agnes", "The Eve of St Mark", the "Ode to Psyche", "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", "Ode to a Nightingale", and probably at about the same time the "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode on Melancholy", "Ode on Indolence", "Lamia Part I", "Otho the Great" (in collaboration with Brown); the second version of *Hyperion*, called *The Fall of Hyperion*, "To Autumn", and "Lamia Part II". Keats' "The Cap and Bells" remained unfinished owning to his illness. Keats' second volume of poems, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems*, was published in July 1820. The volume was generally well received, gaining much praise in some quarters, and the criticism from Blackwood was now much muted; but the sales remained low and tardy. The popularity of Keats' poems grew steadily. Tennyson considered him the greatest poet of the 19th century, while Matthew Arnold commended Keats' intellectual and spiritual passion for beauty. Keats' letters, published in 1848 and 1878, received as much admiration as his poetry. Many of his letters also pose as valuable comments on his poetry. The very personal letters reveal the emotional aspect of Keats' personality.



LET US KNOW

The Romantic Movement: Perhaps you remember that the Romantic Movement was influenced by the French Revolution. Subjectivity, natural beauty, freedom, equality, brotherhood and imagination became the hallmarks of the movement. The 'self' was at the centre of the Romantic poetics. Lyricism was another important aspect of Romanticism. The Romantics were attracted by the elemental simplicity of life. Romanticism favoured mysticism and idealism; and Kant, Hegel and Rousseau became the most influential philosophers of the age. The beginning of Romanticism is dated

alternatively in 1789 (with the French Revolution) or 1798 (with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*).

Lyrical Ballads: It is a collection of poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge. The book was a landmark of English Romanticism, and marked the beginning of a new age.

The French Revolution: The French Revolution (1789-1799) was a period of radical social and political upheaval in French and European history. The ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity became the symbol of the Revolution.

11.4 READING THE TEXTS

This section will guide you to read the prescribed letters by John Keats in the right direction. However, it is insisted that you get hold of a standard text of Keats' Letters, and start reading to gain a better idea of the issues and themes raised in the text.

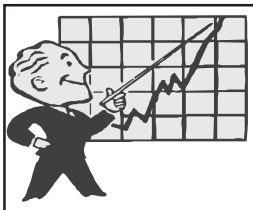
Keats' letters to Benjamin Bailey (dated 22nd November 1817) and to John Hamilton Reynolds (dated 3rd May 1818) exemplify the fact that Keats was constantly preoccupied with the thought of poetic enterprise. The letters depict Keats' largeness of heart, his unselfish and tolerant nature. The letter to Benjamin Bailey is Keats' first significant prose meditation upon the themes which set the note for many of his most important letters and much of his poetry. Here, he discusses his insights on imagination and its relation to truth and beauty, his notions regarding poetic identity, Negative Capability etc. Keats' association of poetic imagination with beauty and truth, as discussed in the letter to Benjamin Bailey, is strikingly evident in his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', where he writes:

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty', - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

The letter to John Hamilton Reynolds was apparently prompted by a reading of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. The letter brings to the fore Keats' forte as a critic. Here, he compares Wordsworth and Milton. Keats develops an extended simile of human life as a 'mansion of many apartments'. The first is the 'infant or thoughtless chamber', after which we encounter 'the

chamber of maiden thought' whose 'pleasant wonders' gradually convince us that 'the world is full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness, and oppression'. The comparison of Milton's thoughts with those of Wordsworth does not testify to Wordsworth's mental superiority, but it testifies to what Keats labels as the 'grand march of intellect' evident in human history. This line of thought becomes the principal theme of the epic poem *Hyperion*, which Keats began in September 1818.

In the following sub sections, we shall discuss the important aspects and issues taken up by Keats in the selected letters.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What are the important points that Keats raises in his letter to Benjamin Bailey?

Q 5: Refer to the main issues Keats takes up in his letter to Hamilton Reynolds.

11.4.1 Major Themes

Keats' letters abound in the poet's aesthetic ideas and contain much poetical value. He formulated a number of critical and poetical ideas in the letters to his friends and relations. The major themes in the letters discussed in this unit are the relationship between beauty and truth; the power of imagination; the idea of poetic identity; the poetic genius of Wordsworth, etc. These themes are discussed in detail below:

Imagination, Beauty and Truth:

The belief that beauty is truth, as expressed in Keats' Letters, has now become the testament of Romantic aesthetics. Keats laid great emphasis on the authenticity of imagination. He asserted that he is certain of nothing but the holiness of heart's affection and the truth of imagination. Keats, in his letter to Benjamin Bailey, wrote: *"What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth". Keats illustrates the creative aspect of imagination, with the aid of Adam's dream: "he awoke and found it truth"*. The imagination is drawn into

the orbit of sensation and perception. Sensation, here, is not conceived merely as sense experience but as the intuitive perception of truth. Keats asserts "O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!" Keats' idea of imagination is integrated with the idea of beauty and truth.

'Imagination' is a major concept in Romantic aesthetics. It occupied the thoughts of almost all the Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. Their views cannot be categorised under one unified formula; however, the term 'Romantic Imagination' is commonly used to describe the diverse views of these poets. However, even before the Romantic Age, the term 'imagination' was in currency. It designated the creative process, and was often held to be synonymous with 'wit' and 'fancy'. However, it was with the Romantics that the term gained importance and popularity. According to Shelley, man is pre-eminently an imaginative being. Wordsworth and Coleridge had their differences regarding the relationship between 'fancy' and 'imagination'. According to Wordsworth, fancy was as creative as imagination; while Coleridge held that imagination was superior to fancy. The basic idea behind Keats' philosophy is the equation of imagination with truth. Keats believed that 'beauty' can be derived through the 'imagination' and this experience can be termed as 'truth'. The process of imagination can create an alternative reality for the poet, which is of the highest order. Keats is also conscious of the fruits of imagination. He talks about the mind which is "imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits – who would exist partly on sensation partly on thought – to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic Mind". Keats commends his friend, Benjamin Bailey, for having such a mind.



LET US KNOW

Coleridge explored the idea of imagination at length. Subsequently, his theory remains the most popular theory on imagination until date. Coleridge in Chapter

XIII of *Biographia Literaria* puts forward his concept of imagination as the following:

"The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the finite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create…"

Poetic Identity and Human Relationship:

In his letter to Benjamin Bailey Keats contemplates on the idea of poetic identity, a concept that is later developed in his other letters. Keats also attempts to resolve the tensions between Bailey and Haydon; and he stresses on the importance of understanding human character, and discusses his own standpoint. Keats' letters often show genuine concern for others. Keats, in the letter to Bailey, then goes on to contemplate on the idea of poetic identity. According to Keats, a man of genius does not have a determined character. Keats stresses the flexibility of poetical mind that can accommodate itself to whatever structure it is put into. So, he writes: "Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect – by (but) they have not any individuality, any determined Character." In a letter to Richard Woodhouse (27 October 1818), Keats termed Wordsworth's concept of the self as "egoistical sublime". Keats further develops the idea of poetic identity in his letter to George and Tom Keats (21 December 1817). Keats, in this letter, talks about the concept of 'Negative Capability'. He describes 'Negative Capability' as a state in which "man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason." It is the poet's capability of negating his own personality in order to enter into a new and aesthetic self,

which is constructed by his imagination and art. The concept thus **was used** to characterise the capacity of the greatest writers (like Shakespeare) to pursue a vision of artistic beauty even when it leads them into intellectual confusion and uncertainty, as opposed to a preference for philosophical certainty over artistic beauty. The term has been used by poets and philosophers to describe the ability of the individual to perceive, think, and operate beyond any presupposition of a predetermined capacity of the human being.

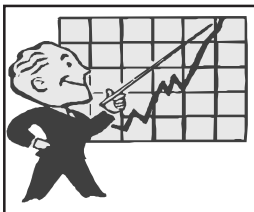
Views on Human Life:

In the letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats meditates upon human life. He formulates a simile of human life as "a mansion of many apartments". The first chamber, i.e., the infant or thoughtless chamber is the period of innocence. The mind is devoid of the complexities of the world. Gradually, one enters into the "chamber of Maiden Thought". The chamber first intoxicates us with the light and the atmosphere. The mind sees "pleasant wonders". However, the mind slowly fathoms the crudeness of things and realises that the "World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression". Sorrow and pain come with the acquisition of knowledge. From the state of innocence, one enters into the state of experience. The chamber of maiden thought becomes gradually darkened, and on all sides of it, many doors are set open, but everything is dark and misty. We feel the burden of mystery. Keats analyses that Wordsworth had come to this point when he wrote the poem "Tintern Abbey"; and Wordsworth's genius explores those dark passages.

Wordsworth and Milton in a critical light:

A reading of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" prompted Keats' letter to John Hamilton Reynolds. It is in this context that Keats starts contemplating on the issues of innocence and experience. Keats' comparison of Milton with Wordsworth reminds us of Arnold's 'Touch Stone' method. Wordsworth's genius is explorative of the dark passages in the human mind. Keats says: "Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton". Keats shows his understanding

of the progress of humanity when he makes the comparison. Keats bestows the credit for Wordsworth's depth of thought on the "general and gregarious advance of intellect" rather than on individual greatness of mind. The context in which Milton was writing makes him intelligible to his readers. For instance, Keats analyses: "who would not rest satisfied with his hinting at good and evil in the *Paradise Lost*, when just free from the inquisition and burning in Smithfield?" Keats, assuming the role of a critic, analyses that Milton did not think into the matters of the human heart as Keats had done. Milton did not try to feel deeply about humanity; and his ideas are facilitated by a change in society rather than by intense feelings. However, Milton's philosophical prowess cannot be doubted. He was as great as Wordsworth was in that. Keats made this comparison to bring forth the fact that "there is really a grand march of intellect". The significance of time and providence is evident here, which subdues the mightiest minds "to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion".



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: Compare Coleridge's idea of imagination with that of Keats, highlighting the significant differences.

Q 7: How is Keats' idea of imagination related to the ideas of beauty and truth?

Q 8: Why does Keats feel that a man of genius does not have a determined character? Analyse.

Q 9: How does Keats use the image of the 'mansion' to analyse the different stages of human life?

Q 10: Why did Keats think that Milton did not feel deeply about humanity? Analyse.

Q11: Do you think Keats demeaned the worth of Milton in comparing him with Wordsworth? Justify.

Q12: What is meant by the Keatsian concept of Negative Capability?

11.4.2 Keats' Prose Style

The letters of John Keats are informal in character, interspersed with lofty poetical ideas, with concerns regarding friends and comradeship. He also deals with the day-to-day worries about family and finances in an equal note with that of his critical insights. The chief appeal of Keats' letters lies in their informality. The prose style of the letters testifies that the letters were composed hastily, perhaps often under pressure and fatigue. The prose is marked by its spontaneity. Keats had a sensitive mind and he was rather easily excitable. His letters often show a movement from one subject to another without any precaution. There is a thoughtful note in Keats' mode of expression. The words and images used by Keats in his letters are vivid and poetically charged. His frequent consideration of the subject of poetry in his letters sometimes blends poetry and prose into one means of expression. The line of argument is also intense and thoughtful in Keats. It is important to note that the prose style of Keats' letters changes in relation to the recipient. While his letters to his brothers are full of interesting news, anecdotes, occasional bursts of humour and intense theorising, the letters to Benjamin Bailey, for instance, are often pacifying. His letters to Fanny Brawne on the other hand, are often outbursts of anguish of his soul. Keats' correspondences sometimes seem impulsive, where there is awareness of his own nature, and the urge to communicate that. However, his prose style glitters with humour and critical intelligence.



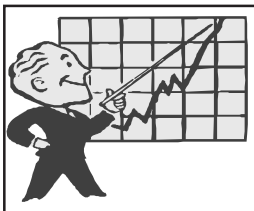
CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 13: Describe the prose style of Keats as employed in his letters.

Q 14: What important aspects of Keats' personality get reflected through his style of correspondence?

11.5 CRITICAL RECEPTION

Keats' works were very roughly treated at its first appearance for apparently political as well as aesthetic reasons. Keats faced onslaughts from the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. However, Shelley in his preface to *Adonais* pays tribute to the poet, while Hazlitt sees his poetry as being characterised by an effeminacy of style. Later, certain Victorian admirers viewed Keats' works as the sublime outpourings of untutored genius. However, Matthew Arnold also emphasised that the important Keatsian writings are the product of different aspects of the poet, the intellectual and tough-minded man. Critics such as Howitt and W. M. Rossetti rejoiced in the exquisite and sensuous nature of Keats' work. Modern criticism analyses the initially negative reception of Keats and his poetry as well as the revival of reputation as a poet critic in later periods. John Jones (1969) repudiates Matthew Arnold's condemnation of the sensuous side of Keats' work and offers a detailed study of the poet's 'sensual humanism'. T. S. Eliot in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* describes Keats' letters as the most notable and most important ever written by any English poet. Anne K. Mellor (1993) sees Keats as an 'ideological cross-dresser', who was able to embrace some aspects of what she calls 'feminine Romanticism'. Again, critics such as Christopher Ricks (1974) examine the structural complexity in Keats' works and builds upon John Bayley's passing references in 'Keats and Reality' to the importance of embarrassment in Keats' work, offering a sustained account of the importance of the concept to the shape of (the poet's) imagination. During the 19th century, Keats' letters were deemed unworthy of serious attention. However, in the 20th century, his letters became as admired and studied as his poetry. Such critical reception of Keats' letter only adds to his reputation as an important Romantic poet of English literature.



Check Your Progress

Q 15: Comment on Keats' early reception and compare that with the later acceptance of Keats as one of the great Romantic poets.



11.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read how Keats' letters provide the most vital context to the study of his poetry. Through his letters, Keats gave voice to the philosophical and critical concepts that inform his poetry. Keats, in his letters to Benjamin Bailey (22nd November 1817) and to John Hamilton Reynolds (3rd May 1818), formulated important opinions on poetic identity, human relationship, human life, knowledge, the sensation and the intellect, imagination, beauty and truth, literary criticism and so on. The letters are marked by their spontaneity of expression and intensity of thought. They are also marked by the single most important concern for humanity. To talk about Keats' reception, we find that Keats was a controversial figure to his contemporaries. However, few modern critics would ever tend to dispute over Keats' status as one of the greatest English poets.



11.7 FURTHER READING

Arnold, Matthew. (1880). "John Keats" in T. H. Ward (ed.) *The English Poets*. London: Oxford University Press.

Bate, Walter Jackson. (1963). *John Keats.* Cambridge, Mass : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Eliot. T. S. (2004). "The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism" (1933), in Jewel Spears Brooker (ed.) *The Contemporary Reviews*. Florida: Cambridge University Press.

Ellershaw, Henry. (ed.). (1922). *Keats: Poetry and Prose*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gittings, Robert. (1970). *The Letters of John Keats: A Selection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jones, John. (1969). *John Keats' Dream of Truth*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Mellor, Anne K. (1993). *Romanticism and Gender.* London and New York: Routledge.

Ricks, Christopher. (1974). *Keats and Embarrassment.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ridley, M. R. (1964). *Keats' Craftsmanship*. London: Methuen.

Rollins, Hyder E. (1958). *Letters of John Keats.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Shelley, P. B. (1821). "Preface to Adonais" in *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion*, *etc.*, Pisa: Privately Printed.

Strachan, John (ed.). (2004). *The Poems of John Keats: A Sourcebook.* London: Routledge.

11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: In many ways it appears so… …Keats' parents died when he was young…. …he was troubled by financial and health problems… …he was often haunted by anguish… …however, the melancholy in his poetry can also be attributed to his sensitive nature.

Ans to Q No 2: Yes… …they communicate a writer's thoughts, perceptions, critical insights, and can reveal his personality… …Keats' letters become pertinent as they provide us with the contexts in which his verse was produced.

Ans to Q No 3: The letter throw light on the kind of poetic life he had lived… …provide the main source from which one can justly appreciate his poetry and personality… … form the mass of critical documents which show the development of Keats' literary and philosophical ideas.

Ans to Q No 4: The letter to Benjamin is Keats' first significant prose meditation upon upon his own poetic self… …he discusses his insights on imagination and its relation to beauty and truth… …refers to his notions of poetic identity, Negative Capability etc.

Ans to Q No 5: The letter to Hamilton brings to the fore Keats as a critic… …he compares Wordsworth and Milton… …the comparison does not testify to Wordsworth's mental superiority, but it testifies to what

Keats labels as the 'grand march of intellect' evident in human history… …this line of thought becomes the principal theme of the epic poem *Hyperion.*

Ans to Q No 6: Coleridge held that imagination was superior to fancy… …He also distinguished between primary and secondary imagination, and asserts that secondary imagination is behind all poetic creativity… …while the basic idea behind Keats' philosophy is the equation of imagination with truth… …Keats believed that 'beauty' can be arrived at through the 'imagination' and this experience can be termed as the 'truth'.

Ans to Q No 7: According to Keats, what the mind perceives as beauty is 'truth'… …he also held that poetic imagination can be grasped in its association with beauty and truth.

Ans to Q No 8: It is mainly because the person's poetical mind is flexible and can accommodate itself to whatever structure it is put into… …this is the way Keats, in his letter to Benjamin Bailey, contemplates on the idea of poetic identity.

Ans to Q No 9: In the letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats formulates a simile on human life as "a mansion of many apartments"… …The first chamber which is the infant or thoughtless chamber is the period of innocence… …the second is "chamber of Maiden Thought"… …the chamber of maiden thought becomes gradually darkened, and on all sides of it many doors are set open, but everything remains dark and misty.

Ans to Q No 10: Keats analysed that Milton did not think into the matters of the human heart as Keats himself had done… ….Milton did not try to feel deeply about humanity and his ideas are facilitated by a change in society rather than by intense feelings.

Ans to Q No 11: No… …Keats made this comparison only to bring forth the fact that "there is really a grand march of intellect"…. … Keats shows his understanding of the progress of humanity when he makes the comparison… … Keats bestows the credit for Wordsworth's depth of thought on the "general and gregarious advance of intellect" rather than on individual greatness of mind.

Ans to Q No 12: 'Negative Capability' is a state in which 'man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason... … it is the poet's capability of negating his own personality in order to enter into a new and aesthetic self, which is constructed by his imagination and art… …writers like Shakespeare had this capability.

Ans to Q No 13: The letters of John Keats are informal in character… …he deals with the day to day worries about family and finances in an equal measure with that of his critical insights… …the use of humour is another notable characteristic.

Ans to Q No 14: The personality of Keats gets reflected in his correspondences… …the letters also show Keats' movement from one subject to another without any precaution… …The thoughtful note in Keats' mode of expression shows his critical insights.

Ans to Q No 15: Keats' work was very roughly treated at its first appearance… … His works were surrounded by controversy… …During the 19th century Keats' letters too were deemed unworthy of serious attention… …However, in the 20th century, his letters began to be admired and studied.



11.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Describe the correlation between Keats' poetry and the ideas that you find in his letters.

Q 2: Attempt a comparison of Keats' views on poetry and imagination with those of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley.

Q 3: How does Keats' perception of imagination differ from Enlightenment's emphasis on reason? Answer with reference to Keats' letters.

Q 4: Discuss briefly Keats' prose style as exemplified in his letters. Does it mark a radical break with his poetic style?

Q 5: How do Keats' letters provide a glimpse of his personality and critical insights? Discuss.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 12: ERIC NEWBY: *A SHORT WALK IN THE HINDU KUSH* (CHAPTER IV "PERA PALACE" AND CHAPTER V "THE DYING NOMAD") [PART I]

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 A Short History of Travel

12.4 Eric Newby: The Travel Writer

12.5 Brief Summary of the Text

12.6 Let us Sum up

12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

12.8 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss briefly the history of travel, and its subsequent development as a literary genre
- identify the importance of Eric Newby as one of the important English travel writers
- describe the literary significance of Newby's travel narrative *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*

12.2 INTRODUCTION

Of late, in the literary world, travel writing or travel narrative has emerged as one of the most popular genres of non-fictional prose writing. This unit intends to introduce you to an exciting travel narrative by Eric Newby—*A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*. You all will agree that travel is really a very exciting experience. When you ask yourself as to why travel is so necessary, you find that travel not only triggers the thrill of escape from the common humdrum life, but also provides relief from the constrictions of the daily life but also acts as a great educative experience. However,

when we discuss travel writing as a literary genre, we find that travel also opens before us the unexplored world of knowledge and experience. Travel writing, while narrating the places visited and people met, also introduces us to the vast world of humanity and the specific culture and history of the peoples as well as that of the places. Moreover, while travelling, the writer, despite having a unique identity of his own, has also to assume a sense of self-hood among the strangers. Perhaps, this is where lies the literary significance of travel where the writer's individuality is questioned and narrativised in a different manner through his telling. Gustave Flaubert said: "Travelling makes one modest…You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world." He also observed how sad it is to experience a wonderful foreign place and to know that one will never return to it. This becomes an ironic experience in the mind of a travel writer although he learns how to try new places all the time. This unit will introduce you to the history of travel in general, and help you to read and contextualise the significance of Eric Newby's *A Short Walk in The Hindu Kush* in that history of travel.

12.3 A SHORT HISTORY OF TRAVEL

An avid reader is certain to get perplexed with the idea of travel, as the problem of an all-inclusive definition will always haunt him. Locating the idea of travel in the greater history of humanity, one finds that it is one of migration or movement from one place to the other. However, whether we can really call it travel in the modern sense is difficult to answer. It is because; there is nothing in antiquity that can be defined as an activity that could have generated a travel narrative. For example, the works of Herodotus, Strabo and Pausanias, like guidebooks, focus on what is to be seen and what not. However, there also lies in their works the hazards of joys, ironies and delights of observations. You should note that travel writing in the modern sense developed much later. Gradually, it began to depend on conventions of self-awareness and self-consciousness followed by an obsession with the idea of the 'personality' during the 18th century, a criterion very uncommon before the European Renaissance. Moreover, the elements of non-utilitarian

pleasure—that means the question whether one is travelling for business or pleasure, began to categorise and constitute a real travel writing.

You also might find that regardless of the method, mass movement generated great uncertainty and often became recognised as adventure. For example, you will find it interesting that in ancient times travel by sea was so hazardous that extensive sacrifices and prayers were held while boarding and departing a ship. There were not merely storms to be survived, but also the pirates and corsairs, who were attracted by the ships carrying gold. And, while a ship was facing an imminent danger of sinking, you will find it surprising to know, one might have to fasten some of the gold around the neck to persuade others who would give the dead body a decent burial. Travel by land was equally hazardous. Because, places outside the city walls, that created 'no man's land', were often ravaged by robbers, hijackers, extortionists, and pilferers that required governments to establish guard posts. Therefore, an alert person will go out only in the daytime, and during night, he would harbour in the houses of friends or in an inn.

Contrary to this sense of travel in ancient times, in more recent times, there developed something that resembled tourism and sightseeing. For example, it was nothing but the wanderlust of the people for "The Seven Wonders" of the ancient World that ascribed to them the status as 'Wonders'. A visitor travelling to Egypt in the 16th century BC would find himself scratching graffiti on the different monuments. People's wanderlust also encouraged them to traverse long distances to visit famous shrines, oracles and temples. For example, the oracle of Delphi (**Delphi** being an archaeological site and a modern town in Greece), the sanctuary of Olympia (**Olympia** being the site of the Olympic Games in classical times in Greece), the acropolises of Athens, the Museums—all these places provided people the pleasures of wonder as well as that of sightseeing.

However, towards the Renaissance age of explorations, travel does mark a crucial moment in modern thought. You must have read or heard about Marco Polo's travel through Asia, which had rendered great help to the colonial explorations of the later times. According to Claude Levi Strauss "when…a human community which had believed itself to be complete and

in its final form suddenly learned…that it was not alone, that it was part of a greater whole, and that, in order to achieve self knowledge, it must first of all contemplate its unrecognisable image in this mirror." Thus, you find that travel has enabled the knowing of the unknown and reaching the unreached since time immemorial. Because of travel, human beings suddenly became aware that there is much to learn from alien countries and their cultures.

In the present situation, however, because of globalisation and cosmopolitanism, travelling has become the most common practice among the people. Many present day writers have taken the idea of travel as the source for literary explorations. Salman Rushdie, one of the most powerful writers of the present times, has aptly said: "Everywhere is now a part of everywhere else." This means that travel has finally reduced the world to a single most entity in the present context.

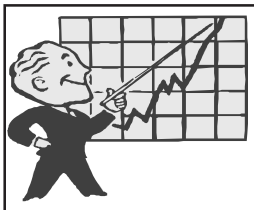


LET US KNOW

You should note that the word Travel is derived from *Travail* means a form of heightened experience. Homesickness and loneliness are two feelings common to all travellers. Equally common is the fear of strangers, of being embarrassed and cheated, of treats from others. If one is a sensitive traveller one will also feel an element of guilt from being alienated from ordinary people. You should also mind that tourism is not travel; so is a guidebook, which has to be frequently consulted while travelling. A travel book is seldom consulted during a trip rather it may be read by a reader who will never take a journey at all. Guidebooks are the part of journalism, while travel books belong to literature. Guidebooks are never autobiographical, but travel books are. In a travel book, you will often experience a commitment to language and to literary artifice and an insatiable impulse to write creatively.

Carl Thompson in his introduction to the book *Travel Writing* writes that the European imperial project, and the global capitalism it promoted, finally laid the foundations of our modern, globalised world. It brought about

cross-cultural contact, and the relocation of individuals and peoples, on a large scale. However, it also did much to establish the enormous inequalities that currently exist between the different regions of the world and especially between the developed 'West' and the less developed 'Rest', in terms of wealth, health and technological advancement. This aspect of Travel occupies an important place in Post-Colonial Studies. Post colonialist scholars have, accordingly, sought to understand the processes of these inequalities, and have often concerned themselves more generally with questions relating to how two different cultures respond to each other. These are, however, research agendas for which travel writing is an immensely useful resource. From the 15th to the 20th century, you should understand that the genre played an integral role in European imperial expansion, and the travel writing of this period is accordingly highly revealing of the activities of European travellers abroad, and of the attitudes and ideologies that drove European expansionism. Similarly, modern travel writing can yield significant insights into the ideologies and practices that sustain the current world order.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: How, do you think the ancient idea of travel is different from the way we understand the term travel today?

Q 2: What are the various connotations of the term travel that you can think of?

Q 3: Would you like to say that travel writing is different from a tourist guidebook?

12.4 ERIC NEWBY: THE TRAVEL WRITER

In this section, we will try to discuss briefly the life and works of Eric Newby. This will help you to locate him as an important travel writer who contributed significantly to the genre of travel writing in English.

George Eric Newby, popularly known as Eric Newby, was an English travel writer. He was born in 1919 and grew up near Hammersmith Bridge,

London. He received his education from St. Paul's School. After leaving school he worked for two years at The Dorland advertising agency until 1938 when he apprenticed aboard the Finnish Windjammer Moshulu and took part in what was known as the 'Grain Race' from Australia to Europe by way of Cape Horn. This voyage was subsequently described under the misleading title *The Last Grain Race* and pictorially documented in *Learning the Ropes*. In fact, two more grain races followed the 1939 race, in which Newby participated, with the last race being held in 1949. Newby's best known works include *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*, *The Last Grain Race*, and *Round Ireland in Low Gear*.

He served in the Black Watch and the Special Boat Section during World War II, and was captured during an operation against the coast of Italy. He was later awarded the Military Cross for his part in the raid. From 1942 until 1945, he was held prisoner of war near Parma, Italy. During a brief escape, he was hidden by a Slovenian family, and met Wanda, who later married him and became a companion on his travels. These experiences were described in his memoir *Love and War in the Apennines*. After the war, he worked in the women's fashion business, (his father had owned a firm making ladies' mantles), before setting out to climb Mir Samir in the Nuristan Mountains of Afghanistan, an expedition later chronicled in *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* — probably his most widely-known work so far, and which included a meeting with Wilfred Thesiger. From 1963 to 1973, Newby was Travel Editor for *The Observer* newspaper.

He breathed his last on October 20, 2006. He was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award of the British Guild of Travel Writers in 2001.Newby's life and work was profiled in ITV's The South Bank Show (director Tony Knox) in 1994. He also made notable travel films for the BBC, returning to Parma with his wife Wanda in The Travel Show (director Paul Coueslant, 1994) and visiting one of his favourite cities, Istanbul (1996).

List of Works:

The Last Grain Race (1956)

A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush (1958)

Something Wholesale (1962)

Slowly Down the Ganges (1966)

Time off in Southern Italy: The Observer Guide to Resorts and Hotels (ed.) (1966)

My Favourite Stories of Travel (ed.) (1967)

Grain Race: Pictures of Life before the Mast in a Windjammer (1968)

Wonders of Britain: A Personal Choice of 480 with Diana Petry (1968)

Wonders of Ireland: A Personal Choice of 484 with Diana Petry (1969)

Love and War in the Apennines (1971)

The Mitchell Beazley World Atlas of Exploration (1975)

Great Ascents: A Narrative History of Mountaineering (1977)

The Big Red Train Ride (1978)

A Traveller's Life (1982)

On the Shores of the Mediterranean (1984)

A Book of Travellers' Tales (ed.) (1985)

Round Ireland in Low Gear (1987)

What the Traveller Saw (1989)

A Small Place in Italy (1994)

A Merry Dance Around the World: The Best of Eric Newby (1995)

Learning the Ropes: An Apprentice in the Last of the Windjammers (1999)

Departures and Arrivals (1999)

Thus, you find that Newby had quite an interesting life history. At the age of eighteen, he signed on as an apprentice of the Finnish barque *Moshulu,* lived in the fo'c'sle as the only Englishman. His career in the army was heroic and romantic. His love for the sea helped him in finding himself in the King's service. After the war he went into the most improbable of trades, *haute couture.* It would strain the imagination to picture this stalwart young adventurer selling women's clothes.

12.5 BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Most of Newby's travel books are placed during World War II when he was acting as a Lieutenant in the British army. *A Short Walk in the Hindu*

Kush was published in 1958. It is an autobiographical account of his adventures in the Hindu Kush, around the Nuristan Mountains of Afghanistan.

A romantic and a reasonless longing led Newby and Hugh M. Carless to journey to the heights of the Hindu Kush. In one such exchange of letters between them, Carless, a well-travelled man, wrote about his earlier climbing expedition to Nuristan, 'The Country of Light' enclosed by the main range of the Hindu Kush Mountains. No Englishman had been there since 1891 and the last Europeans to visit were a German Expedition in 1935. Until 1895, it was called Kafiristan, 'The Country of Unbelievers' after which the Kafir people converted to Islam. The narrator left his job at the fashion industry to embark on this new expedition.

They undergo training to learn the basics of rock-climbing learn the different ways of descending the face of a mountain and equip themselves according to the climatic conditions they were likely to encounter for better chances of survival. Their chance acquaintance with a member of the Alpine Club wrote to the Everest Foundation suggesting a grant towards the cost of their expedition to the Hindu Kush. Newby's wife Wanda also insists on being a part of it. They carry all necessary equipment of an expedition such as the pre-war guides, country guidebooks, large-scale maps, camera, telescope, binoculars, altimeter, prismatic-compasses, and aneroid barometer along with all the mountaineering gear, tents, sleeping bags and canned food.

Newby even researches in the London library searching for volumes on Afghanistan. While in Afghanistan they find that it is a man's country, and, besides tribal warfare, there were other dangers there. They also understood the necessity to maintain Anglo-Afghan relations. The ground realities were much different from the rosy pictures that guidebooks provided. Armenia was a shattered country with towns without any women. In Nuristan, women were less than dust and there were no facilities for even female tourists. Kafir women were practically slaves, being, to all intents and purposes, bought and sold as household commodities. Each valley was inhabited by different tribes and spoke its own language. They come across Kafir highwayman, Kafirs who never spoke of Kafiristan which they

considered an insulting epithet. They met Mongoloid featured Hazaras and crossed Darra Hazara where some 400 Hazara families used to live in a cluster. They travelled miles and miles in no-man's-land of ruined mud forts, met Semitic featured Pathans, saw the life of the nomadic people in encampments of nomad tents and caravanserai. They crossed the Tajik territory inhabited by the Tajiks who were the original Persian owners of the Afghan soil. However, the Tajiks and the Hazaras were a subject race, independent only within their own country, Hazarajat. They learn about the Gujaras, the hill shepherds, partly nomad, from the frontier, originally from Punjab and similarly take interest in the history and culture of the variety of people they knew little about.

The travellers passed through various terrains of jagged peaks, frontiers, rich lands, valleys, orchards, parallel flowing rivers, rivers of salt with forming mirages of flowing rivers, lakes, hamlets, shifting sands, oases, rocky plateaus, melting glaciers, snow-fields, snow-forests, moraine, summits and the misty mountain sides with its hard life. They took all the challenges of the journey very sportingly, learning to bridge the communication gap, to develop a love for the local food, to deal with the consistent affliction of gastric disorders, making sense of the weights and measures, the barter system of butter for salt, learning origins of people, their local customs, coming across lepers, pitching tents in hardy places, sleeping at the bottom of dried water course, being at the centre of violent storms, facing the Wind of Hundred and One Days (Bad-i-Sad-o-Bist) and suffering agonies of heat, fatigue, thirst.

They met different people in their journey, some of whom had evil bent of mind and some others were the able-bodied guides, caravan-masters and porters who formed a good male bonding with the Newby-Carless duo. During the Climbing expedition, the duo discovered the value of immense companionship; they roped together having one another's life in each other's hands. Newby confesses homesickness and admits the value of feet in the Hindu Kush. There was no rescue service in the mountains but only had their guides like Abdul Ghiyas and the likes of Badar Khan, Abdul Rahim and Shir Muhammad. After making it to Mir Samir, an unclimbed glacial

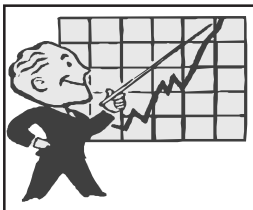
peak, at one point they even gave up the hostile journey, admitting their lack of guts. The fate of the expedition hanged in a balance despite their determination to reach the ridge and, if possible, the summit; 700 feet below the summit, they were considering whether to hold on or let go. Finally, with their morale and strength ebbing, they decide to let go almost in tears.

So, they headed towards Kabul, escorted down the heights by Abdul Motaleb, a Mullah and his grandson. And they met Wilfred Thesiger, a legendary well travelled man on this returning journey. The entire spirit of the expedition is captured in this travel narrative, in which the failure of their journey became irrelevant as the experiences in the journey became much more memorable, rendering insignificant the failure to reach the end point of destination.

Interesting Information that you find in the text of *A Short Walk in the Hindukush*

- Towards the East of Panjsher, on a low and isolated ridge is the yellow sand bank called Reg-i-Rewan (the Running Sands) which is said to have the singular property of singing or moaning when agitated by the wind or otherwise disturbed.
- The Istalif Oasis is reputed to be the producer of most beautiful pottery of a delightful blue colour.
- The Quanat is a subterranean canal in a grove of trees, a magical spot, cool and green in the middle of sun burnt fields, with water sprouting from the hills.
- Oscar Eckenstein, renowned climber at the end of the 19th century, made a principal claim to be the first man to study the technique of holds and balance on rock.
- Killing of a thousand, wild mountain goat called ibex makes a person a Mirgun. It is a custom to secretly bury the weapon with which these animals are killed because the young men seek to find it. The one who finds it is entitled to buy as with it he too has the prospects of becoming a Mirgun.
- It is a custom to put a sick or deeply wounded person in a goatskin, the heat of which draws the poison out of the body and into the skin.
- The Koreish Katir traded butter for salt with the Panjshir people. Sugar was a rare commodity and hardly used in tea.

- One of the surprising things about the country was that, while outside in the open Nuristan was a perfect hell of insect life, inside the houses there seemed to be no bugs or vermin.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What were the most obvious hurdles they might have faced during their expedition to the Hindu Kush?

Q 5: What might have encouraged Newby to undertake the journey to the Hindu Kush?



12.6 LET US SUM UP

By the time you finish reading the unit on Eric Newby's travel narrative *A Short Walk in Hindu Kush*, you would not only find yourself familiarised with the general ideas of travel and travel writing, but also be acquainted with the importance of Eric Newby as an English travel writer. You have, by now, understood that a successful travel writing traverses certain poles like 'Us' and 'Them', description of individual physical things and the larger issue of what it is 'all about', the particular and the universal. You have learnt that a tourist guidebook is not a travelogue, nor a diary on places visited. Travel writing is a literary genre where the writer is consciously projecting his self-consciousness in his own writing. Just like the literary artist, a travel writer too often uses understatement, foreshadowing and many more techniques to make the travel narrative 'literary'. You have perhaps finally understood the fact that travel writing is particularly suited to modern conditions and situations in which travel becomes a precondition for every globalised human being.



12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Certainly different… … movement from one place to another in ancient times cannot be called travel as it could not have

generated a travel narrative… …modern idea of travel began with the conventions of self awareness and self consciousness of the writer/ traveller.

Ans to Q No 2: Sense of adventure… …wanderlust… …sightseeing… …tourism… …the encounter between 'us' and 'them'… …homesickness… …loneliness etc.

Ans to Q No 3: Yes… …a tourist guidebook is not travel writing… …it is seldom consulted during a trip… … it may be read by a reader who may never take an actual journey at all.

Ans to Q No 4: Hurdles were many… …they had to know the basics of rock climbing… …had to carry necessary equipment of an expedition… …had to traverse through terrains of jagged peaks, frontiers… …had to encounter people having evil bent of mind.

Ans to Q No 5: It was not simply mountaineering that attracted him… …the journey was a part of a romantic longing lying deep in the hearts of most Englishmen… …the purpose was not to enjoy celebrated spectacles of the tourist spots but to set feet where very few civilised people have trodden.



12.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: What, according to you, are the major characteristics of a travel narrative? Discuss with reference to Eric Newby's book *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush.*

Q 2: Attempt to write a brief history of travel? What are the changes that you notice in travel writing with the passage of time?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 13: ERIC NEWBY: *A SHORT WALK IN THE HINDU KUSH* (CHAPTER IV "PERA PALACE" AND CHAPTER V "THE DYING NOMAD") [PART II]

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives

13.2 Introduction

13.3 Reading the Text

- 13.3.1 Reading Chapter IV: "Pera Palace"
- 13.3.2 Reading Chapter V: "The Dying Nomad"
- 13.3.3 Major Themes
- 13.3.4 Newby's Prose Style

13.4 Let us Sum up

13.5 Further Reading

13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

13.7 Possible Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the main issues implicit in the chapter IV called "Pera Palace"
- read Chapter V—"The Dying Nomad" in terms of its various aspects
- have some ideas on the prose style of Newby
- identify the important themes and explain them

13.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit follows the previous unit in which we have discussed the history of travel, and Eric Newby's significance as a travel writer with particular reference to his *A Short Walk in the Hindukush.* This unit takes you through two of the chapters in the book namely "Pera Palace" and "The Dying Nomad". Both the chapters deal with uncomfortable road journey of the narrator as well the multifarious experience that the narrator and his mates encountered during their travel. However, the constantly shifting

locations and the reference to the map help a reader like us to trace the journey easily. Newby's literary style was inspired by the comic portrait of the Englishman abroad and you will that some of his important themes in this travel narrative include–The Theme of Exploration, Homesickness, Emerging Self The Problem of 'Us' and 'Them'

13.3 READING THE TEXT

Evelyn Hugh in his Preface to the Penguin edition of the book writes—*"Dear reader, if you have any softness left for the idiosyncrasies of our rough island race, fall to and enjoy this characteristic artefact."* Such an address foreshadows what a reader is going to find in Newby's *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush,* a travel narrative occasioned by an expedition to northern Afghanistan. In 1956, after well ending his London career in fashion, Newby decided to travel to a remote corner of Afghanistan where no European had ventured for more than 50 years. He sent a telegraph to the diplomat Hugh Carless, then First Secretary in Tehran, requesting his company on an expedition to northern Afghanistan. Although they were ill prepared and had little experience of the region, they decided to climb Mir Samir, an unclimbed glacial peak in the Hindu Kush of about 20,000 feet high. Evelyn Hugh in his Preface also writes that readers are relieved of the difficulty by his own deliciously funny description, which immediately captivates the reader of the opening chapters of *A Short Walk.* One can only use the absurdly trite phrase 'the call of the wild' to describe the peculiar impetus which carried Mr. Newby from Mayfair to the wild mountains of Afghanistan. He was not a sailor when he embarked in the *Moshulu*; nor was he a mountaineer when he decided to climb the Hindu Kush. A few days climbing on the rocks in Wales, was his only preparation. The two chapters "Pera Palace" and "The Dying Nomad" have been selected from this work for your reading.

13.3.1 Reading Chapter IV: "Pera Palace"

The chapter *Pera Palace* in continuation with the preceding chapters, begins after an uncomfortable journey on the road. The

narrator, along with his wife Wanda, arrives at Istanbul just as the sun is setting. Istanbul is the largest city located in the North-west of Turkey; it lies on the Bosphorous Strait and encloses the natural harbour known as the Golden Horn. The narrator describes the green and wind-swept Sea of Marmara. They wish to enter the city by the Golden Gate on the seaward side, forgetting that for several hundred years, the gate was sealed up.

Having left the car in the courtyard of the old Embassy and changing currency with the gatekeeper, they ask him for a place to stay and are told about "Star Oteli" (hotel) fifty yards away. They are driven to the hotel in a taxi, directed by a sinister-looking pair who claims to be brothers. On reaching the place, their hearts sink as they are led into an almost empty hotel having nearly vertical flight of steps, seeing through the open doors strange men lying on their beds. They come across an obnoxious smell that has filled the corridors and the rooms alike. The bedroom for two that they are shown in to is a "nightmare room" that is illuminated by a forty-watt bulb highlighting a black mouldy wall, with an almost perfectly concave bed. The room offers a sense of almost being occupied, with a pair of boots underneath the bed, a long strand of red hair in the washbasin and with the clear impress of a human form on the bed sheets.

After the discomforts on the road, this becomes too much to bear and they get into the same taxi with the grinning driver, to be taken to another hotel called the Pera Palace, and as the title itself suggests this is central to the chapter. They settle at the Pera Palace and take a large room which probably may have had a splendid view of the Golden Horn before but was blocked by a high rise building in between. Early on the next morning their friend arrives at their door, who was to accompany them on the expedition to Nuristan, a land bordered by the Hindu Kush ranges. This friend is Hugh M. Carless who is the son of a retired Indian Civil Servant and himself posted as the foreign secretary to the Embassy at Kabul. He had

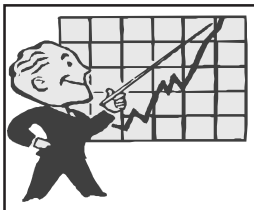
arrived by air and, like an epitome of a young explorer, he appeared fit and clean, armed with maps and lists, and with all gusto to embark on the journey ahead. The fatigued couple not wanting to travel right-away try to excuse themselves, saying their wagonwas to undergo servicing, but much to their surprise, Hugh has already arranged for it to be ready by the afternoon.

The couple tell Hugh about their hardships they have encountered in their journey so far, of being stripped by the big-built customs officials on the Yugoslav frontier, the obstacles such as the floods, landslips, mosquitoes and all the mishaps of their "spine-shattering" journey. However, it makes no difference to him and they fail to gather his understanding. Only when Wanda voices the couple's serious wish to explore the locales of Istanbul for three days it is then agreed to by Hugh.

They have grown fond of the Pera Palace and have imaginary speculations of the unknown number of times that their room may have been occupied, like a comical setting, by the likes of some bearded minister pursuing a woman to bed. They find that their bathroom had an interesting unusual bath that is filled up on its own without the use of taps, by way of the waste pipe, which was actually meant to drain water. It is Wanda who resolves the mystery, jamming her ear to the bathroom wall to find that the water is the contribution of the man next door who just finishes bathing and drains it out of his bath. It is the same used water that finds its way into the bath of the couple, through the inter-connected drainpipes! This adds to the element of humour in the chapter. The working staff of the Pera Palace was mostly too old and appeared very sad. Apart from the man next door, they have seen no one around and the similar atmosphere of dead-silence prevails even in the restaurant in which they eat meals.

After three days' stay, they are ready to leave Istanbul and Hugh arrives from his modern up-hill hotel, ready to take to the road. There is a long wait for the ferry that is to take them across to Scutari,

on which their wagon is embarked. Suddenly, due to an urgent need to visit the toilet the narrator is shown to the quarters by the ferry master, returning from which he finds to his utter surprise, the ferry boat disappearing towards the Asian shore along with his wagon and his ticket. In addition, right after that, before he can register his loss, he is pick-pocketed by one of the three fine-looking porters in the crowd. Again, the ferry master escorts him, on to the next boat. By the end of the chapter one finds the narrator being duped and in a state of complete loss, when he realises that for the second time in his life he has to leave Europe penniless.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is Pera Palace? Narrate the experiences of the narrator in Pera Palace.

Q 2: Mention the names of the places that the travellers reach in the chapter “Pera Palace”?

13.3.2 Reading Chapter V: “The Dying Nomad”

The next chapter *The Dying Nomad*, continues with the narrator’s road journey beyond the Istanbul borders to the Persian frontier and he accounts the series of misadventures in Armenia, a mountainous country bordered by Turkey to the west, in the south Caucasus region, located at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe (Eurasia). It is very important for you to understand the constantly shifting locations with reference to the map, so that you can trace the journey easily.

This is an interesting chapter of misadventures in the journey, caused by a confused sense of direction. Hugh instead of turning right to Agri and the Persian frontier drives straight on, without realizing that it is the wrong direction! They are in a small one-street town called Horason, beside the Aras river, the road through which there is a long climb, followed by a descent on curvy bends into a canyon

of red, silver and green cliffs and a castle on top and villages down below. As they are tired and dirty they stop to bathe in the open, in a deep pool of cold water and only then, it appears to them that it is probably not the Aras but some other river because unlike the Aras it seemed to flow in the direction of east to the west.

They drive the night across a half-ruined village, through a ravine, into the pine forests with Hugh's radio blaring louder and louder, until they realise that what they are listening to is a Russian radio station. Only after switching the lights on and huddling over the map, does it strike them that they are about sixty kilometres away from Kars and that they have already left behind the route to the Persian frontier towards which they were to go. That they are in another place, had clicked Wanda's mind, right when they were discussing the opposite flow of the river they had bathed in but she thought they were aware of it.

This makes Hugh really serious as he finds himself in a tight situation, for being an answerable Secretary of the Foreign Service and to add to it, not possessing a diplomatic visa for Turkey. They had the permission to cross Anatolia by the shortest possible route but if they took the Turkish side of the road they had every chance to be shot and with the dozen of daggers they carried, it could be easily made into an encounter-episode; moreover, Wanda was British only by virtue of marriage. The couple still do not understand the gravity of the situation and indifferent to their humour, Hugh drives to the next town Sarikamis. They are by then, ninety kilometres from Horasan town and decide to return the same way the next day.

But the following day brings unseen disaster and tragedy. By evening, they return to a fortress town on the Persian frontier called Bayazid. Even though the ancient guide to Turkey had made it sound romantic like most guides do, the actual reality gave a different picture. Instead of the beauty of the Caravan road, they find Bayazid, a sad shanty town, having survived several earthquakes and countless massacres, patrolled by soldiers. Even as night was

approaching, determined to sleep in the Persian town, they speed towards the east, through the deserted road that ran through an arid plain bordered by low mountains.

Close under these ranges are the black tents of the nomad people and they had seen them in bands on the move in Ararat. Each family travelled with their flock of goats, herds of sheep, donkeys, bullocks that carried tent poles and big tribal cooking pots, small children sitting on lean horses and the traditionally-dressed men and women-folk on foot, walking through the dust. The travellers are unable to reach the Customs House on the Turkish side because they do not know what awaits them in the twilight hour. Something dark looms on the road in front of them and before they realise, a sudden braking causes the speeding wheels to lock and, in effect, they skid to the front, with the luggage falling on them, pressing them to the windscreen. The horn blares with the weight until it came to a standstill, a few feet from whatever it is on the road.

This shapeless form turns out to be a dying nomad and as the title suggests, the chapter is centred on this figure. This man appears to be of seventy years, badly tanned by the sun, with terrible injuries on him and a nose almost completely torn off, probably being run down by something from behind, well before their wagon even appears. The nomad is still conscious and breathing and they wrap him in a blanket and dress the deep wound on the nose, without moving him off the road as they have hardly any idea of the internal injuries the man may have suffered from.

At that moment the tribesmen, followed by the women and then the children come running, forming a half-circle in the light of the lamps. Suddenly, the man's wife, a black-haired woman of about thirty with jangling gold ornament, flings herself down on the dust, wailing for her husband. Then arrives a jeep, full of soldiers and miraculously one amongst them happens to be a doctor who speaks English, who on seeing the man's growing and swelling wound, suggests taking him to the nearest military camp. When they tell

the doctor that they are headed towards Persia, he warns them saying, “You cannot kill man and go away. There will be inquiry.” Even as they are in no way responsible for the man’s dying condition, they find themselves implicated in this. Nevertheless, the doctor assures them not to worry, as the man is only a nomad, as if indicating that in reality a nomad’s life had little value in their land.

The men help them to place the dying man in the backseat of the wagon, so that he can be taken to the camp. However, on reaching there they find no doctor or any person who could speak an understandable language. So, they drive fifteen miles to Bayazid town taking the groaning man and his wailing wife to a military hospital. But despite these efforts, early in the next morning the man dies “horribly” on a canvas stretcher. In his last hour, just before he dies, he is surrounded by judges, prosecutors and interpreters screaming at him, to answer what had run him down. However, without answering, he dies and this opens up the doors for the proceedings of an inquiry and thus, the nightmare of the day begins.

In a convoy of the vehicles, they return to the site of the incident for an inquiry headed by a hostile judge, a young prosecutor, a hardy colonel and an indifferent captain along with a misleading interpreter. While the young prosecutor seems to offer a ray of hope, the interpreter is bent on destroying their chances. The interrogation continues throughout the baking noontime until evening and half a dozen times, they are made to re-enact the incident, with their statements recorded, in the absence of witness. However, the tribesmen do commit the offence of perjury by lying about the incident and offering flowers to the judge as if to appease him.

The prosecutor does not wish to be taken into their confidence and demands the truth from the lying men. The couple request Hugh to send a cable to Ankara; he was more bothered of what his Ambassador would think if he happened to arrive in Persia after such a fix. The narrator notices that there are endless troupes of policemen and when they are about to be taken for the night’s custody

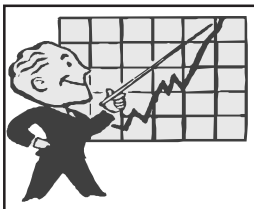
as a protective measure from the tribesmen, a defiant Hugh insists on being trusted with his word not to runaway. Thus, arrangements are made for them to stay at an inn, that turns out to be inconvenient and loathsome. While dining hungrily they meet a medical officer in a battledress who runs the fate of Armenia, a dead country to him, with no presence of women and full of milling soldiers becoming mad with no objective in that land.

The doctor then discusses the next day's proceedings regarding the decision for a trial and mentions a similar incident in which a German lorry driver from Tehran was retained for having cut off a child's foot with the lorry. At nine in the morning, they present themselves in the Courthouse and are led into a simple, whitewashed room with half a dozen chairs and a desk for the prosecutor. For two hours, the argument goes on, with Wanda taking up the arguments stretching unnecessarily from diplomatic immunity, children suffering in Europe without their mother, to ships or planes missed in time, the absence of witnesses and ruined expeditions. Hugh proposes the proceedings to be stay-ordered for a week, so that in the meantime he can consult the authorities in Ankara. Hugh's Diplomatic Visa applied only for Iran and had it applied for Turkey it would have been difficult to detain him.

Then like a knight in shining armour, Niki the doctor arrives in an hour's time, in his jeep and the interpreter's role is banished as Niki begins to translate sentence by sentence, English to Turkish, Turkish to English. When Hugh shows a renewed interest to send a telegram, he learns that there is no facility for direct communication and he will have to send it to Ezerum from which it will be relayed and so he writes a telegram which reads, "Detained Bayazid en route Tehran awaiting formulation of charge killing civilian stop Diplomatic visa applicable Iran only."

Niki translates it into Turkish and holding the message the prosecutor leaves the room abruptly, only to return with a clerk dictating a long document that gives an entire account of the affair

and expresses Hugh's complete innocence! It was as if a drama ends with the final affixation of the official stamp and the prosecutor clapping his hands, treats them to coffee. The surprise element is in the unknown factor that suddenly reverses the court's opinion and their sudden change of mind. Niki is asked by the prosecutor to tell them that it is all due to Hugh's and the couple's "gentlemanly" ways in the whole matter, due to which the prosecutor decides not to proceed with the matter. The ironical twist to the whole incident in the chapter is in the very twist of circumstances. The statement uttered by first medical officer of the convoy, that there was no need to worry about the accident, as the person in question was only a dying nomad, rings true in the end.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Why is the chapter "The Dying Nomad" is so interesting?

Q 4: What ideas do you have of the Nomads from the chapter "The Dying Nomad"?

Q 5: In what ways, were the travellers implicated in something for which they were in no way responsible?

13.3.3 Major Themes

The following are some of the possible themes that you will find interesting to locate in the chapters you have already read in the previous section.

The Theme of Exploration:

It was not mountaineering that attracted Newby and the Alps abound in opportunities for every exertion of that kind. It was the romantic, irrational longing, which lies deep in the hearts of most Englishmen, to shun the celebrated spectacles of the tourist and without any concern with science or politics or commerce, simply to set their feet where few civilised feet have trod. But, along with

this it is also about the journey within, to know oneself better by stepping out of one's comfort zone and search for one's unknown strengths, measured against the way one reciprocates to unseen obstacles and challenges. A journey transforms an individual if he takes it in the right spirit and this becomes obvious following a sense of adventure and wanderlust that Newby embarks on this journey, with just the basic preparation of four-day' training in mountaineering, to survive in hostile terrains. Moreover, even as Newby and Hugh are headed towards a climbing-expedition, on the way the couple Newby and Wanda do not miss the opportunity to stay back for three days in Istanbul, just to relax and enjoy the locales of the country. Instead, of an objective-oriented outlook, it reflects their subjective interest to soak in the experiences of a new place. And the fear of the unknown simply adds more to the theme of exploration.

Homesickness:

There is an old proverb, which reads "Home is where the heart is" and this is true for every traveller, who steps to explore the world outside, only with a longing to return home, seated in one's heart. In one of the chapters titled 'Going down', the narrator cannot help expressing his longing for home and he says, "With some monks in the foreground fishing for carp it would have been an illustration in a pictorial history of England. For a moment I felt homesick." Up in the mountains of Arayu, one of the loneliest places on earth, with all the winds of Asia sweeping over it, he misses his wife and children. In the two chapters, you have read this theme is hardly available simply because Wanda, Newby's wife is always with him helping him to enjoy each moment together.

The Emerging Self:

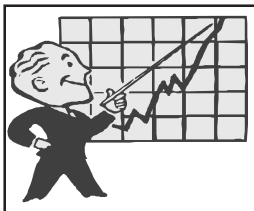
The book is a well-blended travel narrative with elements of both fact and fiction. There is an autobiographical impulse in Newby's work as it shapes from his own real-life experience of such an expedition. Eric Newby is enriched by his travel experience and soon he discovers immense companionship and emotional attachments

to the memories of this journey that he pens down. The narrator's lighter vein or his funnier side makes the difficulties of the journey endurable and enjoyable. It is as if an element of humour rubs on to the rest following which he gets encouraged to take all the hardships, mishaps, misadventures, challenges in the right spirit. The two chapters are full of such incidents which they take on sportingly, be it the strange reception they receive in the hands of the sinister looking brothers, the comical description of the despicable hotel and hotel rooms, the discovery of the logic behind the self-filling bath at Pera Palace, their lost sense of direction on the way to the Persian frontier, the irony in the absence of a qualifying Visa, the wailing wife of the dying nomad, their handling of the undeserving proceedings, or the incident of being pick-pocketed and left behind by a ferryboat.

The Problem of 'Us' and 'Them':

The character of Newby offers a fresh perspective on the dissolving differences of the 'us' and 'them' by rendering defunct the stereotypes of an Englishman. Newby is passionate enough to leave the comforts of a secured job, to set out to explore and scale heights in an unexplored place. He is comfortable to be led by Hugh and the local guides on this expedition without any issues of ego. In the two chapters, the travellers are caught unaware with the sense of mistrust and suspicion of the local people like the two brothers, the ferrymen, the opportunistic pickpockets, the exaggerating tribesmen, the evil interpreter or the suspicious authority who implicate them in the accident. He even confesses his handicap in the sense of direction, the lack of guts to complete the climbing-expedition and the tears for being unable to do so. Yet, nowhere in the book does one find Newby agitated or tormented, despite the unexpected situations and discomforts of the journey. He leaves all his inhibitions behind on this trek, bonds with the local guides, endures all the hardships, finds pleasure in sharing the joys of his binocular with the local people and even confesses lack of guts and tears of emotion at being unable to complete the intended journey. Instead of being a domineering

figure, he becomes like an equal of the natives, which transforms and brings out the best in him. This is what is so significant about Newby as a travel writer.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 6: What is the thematic significance of the chapters you have read from the book *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*?

Q 7: Do you feel that the problem of 'us' and 'them' is a common problem that the travellers have faced in these two chapters?

13.3.4 Newby's Prose Style

It can be easily assumed that Newby's literary style was inspired by the comic portrait of the Englishman abroad presented in the writings of writers like Alexander Kinglake, Robert Byron and Evelyn Waugh. In a preface to the book Waugh identified the central elements of this humorous tradition: "its quintessentially the English spirit of amateurism and its tone of ironic understatement." Evelyn Waugh considers the importance of Eric Newby as a travel writer by specifying "the understatement, the self ridicule, the delight in the foreignness of foreigners, the complete denial of any attempt to enlist the sympathies of his readers in the hardships he has capriciously invited" as typical British qualities. For Newby, a large part of the joy of travelling is filled by the comic misunderstanding occasioned by an attempt to fathom the world of foreign countries. And, he enjoyed it in the fullest sense. He never gets annoyed or astounded by the problems he faces on the way. He, instead, takes them to be very normal to a traveller.

Newby's travel narrative *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* adopts many of the devices of fictions. This is not a travel diary with very dull and uninteresting sequential entries of events and incidents that fill the traveller's experience in the itinerary. Instead, Newby very

tactfully creates suspense and generates irony by devices of concealment and foreshadowing. Newby has very artistically presented the narrator as a liar to retain the interest of the reader with the spirit and techniques of fictions. It resembles the literary form of a romance by containing sufficient amount of wonders, surprises and incredibility. However, he is seen to be very careful while locating their wonders within an actual, verifiable, easily identifiable geographical and topographical location. The spirit of authenticity is maintained by maps and lists carried by the narrator in order to fix locations for himself and for the readers.

Newby was born at the transitional period of the Victorian and Edwardian era, when Englishmen explored the world with a certain purpose and tangible interest in mind rather than for frivolous pleasure, enduring a lot of hardships and imponderables. However, it is intensely English, despite the fact that most of its action takes place in wildly foreign places and that it is written in an idiomatic, uncalculated manner. It delights the heart of fellow Englishmen, and should at least enlighten those who have any curiosity about the odd character of the Kingdom. It exemplifies the essential traditional amateurism of the English. However, Newby is also praised for his understatement, the self-ridicule, and the delight in the foreignness of foreigners, and above all the complete denial of any attempt to enlist the sympathies of his readers in the hardships he has capriciously invited.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: What would you consider the most significant aspect of Newby's prose style?



13.4 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, you have learnt that the chapter "Pera Palace" informs about Newby's unique experiences in hotels in Istanbul, and how he needed

to make adjustments with a lot of things. The second chapter, on the other hand, discusses how often foreigners get implicated in unwanted circumstance. However, in both cases, the joy of travel remains in taking the adventures just as they are with the sole motto of knowing the unknown and reaching the unreached.



13.5 FURTHER READING

Edwards, Justin D. & Rune Graulund. (eds). (2011). *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Fussell, Paul. (ed). (1987). *The Norton Book of Travel.* Norton and Co Inc

Newby, Eric. (1968). *A Short Walk in The Hindu Kush.* Great Britain: Penguin Books

Thompson, Carl. (2011). *Travel Writing.* London: Routledge.

Web Resources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Short_Walk_in_the_Hindu_Kush

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Newby

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1532127/Eric-Newby.html

http://theopencritic.com/?p=12

http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2006/oct/23/guardianobituaries.booksobituaries.

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Pear Palace is the name of the hotel… …it is markedly different from another hotel called “Star Oteli” which is very dirty and mouldy… …the narrator started speculating the unknown number of times that their room might have been occupied,or some bearded minister pursuing a woman to bed… …besides, he had the humorous experience of ‘used’ waters coming to their bathroom… …takes note of the old and gloomy working staff of the hotel etc.

Ans to Q No 2: They first reach "Star Oteli"… …then another 'good' hotel called the Pera Palace… …after three days they start the journey towards Scutari.

Ans to Q No 3: The chapter is interesting because of the misadventures associated with the journey, confused sense of direction and the fear of the unknown on the part of the narrator.

Ans to Q No 4: Nomads are wandering people… …each nomad family travelled with their flock of goats, herds of sheep, donkeys, bullocks etc…. …they were wearing traditional dresses;… … men, women, children all walked on foot… …a nomad's life had little value.

Ans to Q No 5: They are mistakenly held responsible for the condition of the dying nomad… …enquiry commission is set up… …they have to face unwanted situations… …but finally they get free from a supposed 'trial' just because of their 'gentlemanly' nature.

Ans to Q No 6: The prescribed chapters help one to understand that exploration is the one of the main motives of any travel… …the problem of homesickness torments the travellers if they have to spend a long period away from home… …the emergent problem of 'Us' and 'Them'… …the emerging self of the writer.

Ans to Q No 7: Yes… …because the travellers have to constantly adjust themselves with the emerging situations in a new country… …they have to suffer from the fear of the unknown… …no trust can easily be built between 'us' and 'them' etc.

Ans to Q No 8: The comic portrait of an Englishman abroad… …the use of understatement… … self-ridicule and the delight in the foreignness of foreigners… … the complete denial of any attempt to enlist the sympathies of his readers in the hardships he himself has invited.



13.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Do you think that the constantly changing locations in the two chapters prescribed adds to the pleasures of reading the book, A Short Walk in the Hindukush? Discuss.

Q 2: Critically analyse the major themes of *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* with special reference to the chapters prescribed for you.

Q 3: How does Newby represent the problem of 'us' and 'them' in the two chapters "Pera Palace" and "The Dying Nomad"?

Q 4: Do you think that 'the fear of the unknown' is common to every travel writer? Give a reasoned answer based on your reading the two chapters prescribed?

Q 5: How do the experiences of travel help in constructing the self of the travel writer? Does Newby's narrator succeed in adjusting himself with the people and places he encounters?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 14: V.S. NAIPAUL: *AN AREA OF DARKNESS* (SECTION I, CHAPTER I)

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 A Brief Account of Travel Writing

14.4 V.S. Naipaul: Life and Works

14.5 Reading the Chapter

14.6 Important Themes

14.7 Style and Language

14.8 Let us Sum up

14.9 Further Reading

14.10 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

14.11 Possible Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss what a travel writing is
- explain how travel writing has come to occupy a place of importance in the realm of contemporary literature
- discuss the significance of V. S. Naipaul as an author
- describe Naipaul's contribution to travel writing

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, you have already read about travel writing, and I am sure, you must have gained some ideas on travel writing as an important genre in contemporary narratives. This unit also deal with a travel narrative—that is V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* the first section of the first chapter of which has been prescribed for your study. We hope that from this unit, you will have a refreshing experience of Travel writing through the study of Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness.*

4.3 A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF TRAVEL WRITING

In this section, we shall try to understand what travel writing or travel literature is all about, which texts may be identified as instances of travel writing, and since when, such writing made expression in the larger field of literary world. Owing to the different kinds of books, which deal with travel in varied approaches, it becomes a rather difficult task to arrive at a singular coherent definition of travel writing. At the outset, it would be of importance to keep in mind that literature of travel and written records of travel are not synonymous. In the former, the author is generally a person who displays literary taste through which his narration of travel attains the quality of literature. The author's literary capability and personal qualification as an author bestows a literary quotient to the narration of the account of travel accomplished by such persons. On the hand, written records of travel generally are records of travel which read more like informative report writing such as guide books on travel and tourism brochures that are intended to give details of a certain journey and discoveries made the author and as such it tends to be more scientific and less imaginative than that of the works that may be counted as examples of travel literature. However, one may discern the following traits generally found in the literature of travel:

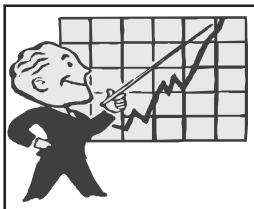
i. The author of travel literature is one in whom the desire to travel is inherent
ii. The author's treatment of travel in terms of narration should be such that the author's passion and spirit is reflected in a similar vein to that of any other form of literary writing of the author

Unlike the written record of travel, literature of travel does not intend to produce the effect of accuracy deliberately except if required by the nature of the text. In books of discovery where travel forms the unifying strand, accuracy in terms of history and scientific knowledge is imperative owing to the nature of narration and intention of narration. Having said so, it would be pertinent to remember that the travel writing that we encounter in modern times may be traced back to ancient roots such as "the factual record as well as the mythical, the legendary and the ancient epics…" (Youngs, 19).

Early examples of travel writing comprise several books written by Arab travellers such as Ibn Batutta, Petrarch's *Mount Ventoux* (1336); *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoueries of the English Nation* (1589) by Richard Haklyut is generally considered one of the finest examples of early travel writing – a book that was developed primarily on the basis of eye witness accounts of Haklyut's expeditions and voyages. In the year 1634, Sir Thomas Herbert presented his account of experiences in his *Some Years Travels into Divers Parts of Africa and Asia the Great that had achieved considerable success owing to his spontaneous and light hearted narration. In the 18th century when England witnessed a splurge of maritime activities several maritime diaries such as those of Captain James Cook's, published in 1784, were in vogue. These accounts were devoid of the imaginary element and evocativeness which one may encounter in the literature of travel, a distinctive body of writing that came be recognised as having literary value as other genres of literature.* For example, Charles Darwin's famous book *Voyage of the Beagle* published in 1839 is a book of expedition in which the very nature of the subject matter necessitated that the author made truthful record of facts and figures where the scope for imagination was almost absent or very limited.

By the middle of the 20th century travel writing, especially Western travel writing came to be considered an exercise in Imperialism whereby the West viewed the rest of the world – the Non-west and engaged in a discursive representation of the 'Other. Recent approaches to travel writing however, attempt to examine travel literature as politically motivated owing to the fact that it is an outsider's representation as the native seldom finds any need to travel and represent the local landscape within which he or she is situated. In this perspective, then travel literature may provide the reader with an opportunity to analyse the discursive construction of the spatiality seen through the knowledge/power lens. This happens because the eye of the narrator who is most of the times an 'outsider', engages in the act of imposing identity on and meaning about the native and the society and culture thereof while 'silencing' the native. This stand towards travel literature is also quite identical to the feminist approach which looks at how literature

had been engaging in 'silencing' the voice of the woman as the other – both the native and the woman needs to be represented, they cannot 'write' themselves.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How is travel writing different from written records of travel?

Q 2: Mention the two qualifying traits of travel writing.

Q 3: Give some instances of early travel literature.

Q 4: How does the travel narrative help in the discursive construction of spatiality?

The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing opines that travel writing is one "the most socially important of all literary genres. It records our temporal and spatial progress" while discussing travel writing as a socially significant genre informed with spatial and temporal aspects. It is a genre that allows the production of a sense of difference and affinity in relation to the viewer and the viewed – the traveller and the subject creating an idea of place, people and culture that comprises of the social, economic, psychological and cultural realms that includes both individual and national perspectives.

There has been an abundance of travel narratives throughout the ages as travel in various forms–personal and social, religious and secular has existed as a part human activity since the past. Critics have agreed upon the difficulties involved in defining the term (Holland and Huggan, 1998; Kowaleski, 1992;Thompson, 2011) as the form appears to accommodate other forms such diary, journalistic writing, memoirs, letters, guidebooks and fiction as well which lends a distinctive sense of heterogeneity to the narrative in itself. Commonly understood as factual first person narrative, travel writings then tend move between various forms, as there is an absence of well-demarcated boundary. If we examine Swift's *Gulliver's Travel* or Melville's *Typee* for instance, we shall realise that travel informs the underlying design of both narratives but they do not fall into the genre of

travel writing owing to their fictional character. However, in both cases, the narrative may be said to have been influenced by the structural form of travel writing. There are also instances where a travel narrative rests on techniques that belong to the world of fiction; the narrator adheres to elements of fiction such as "plot, characterisation and dialogue…manipulation and invention of detail." (Youngs).

William Sherman identifies several forms of writing in early modern England in which one may trace the genesis of English travel writing, as we now know it. He feels that one would be able to trace the origin of modern English travel writing in the written records of people belonging to various walks of life including pilgrims, errant knights, merchants, explorers, colonisers, captives and castaways, ambassadors, pirates and scientists and ones who edited others' record of travel which displayed a varied style, method and tone thereby making it rather difficult for categorisation into a distinctive generic form. However, modern definition of travel writing would prefer to adhere to authenticity while emphasising actual travel undertaken by the actual narrator. Since the 16th century, when documentation occupied a place of prominence within the physical act of travel, the written accounts of the travellers, merchants, ambassadors among others who were involved in the act of travelling for various purposes, began to be counted as important owing to the representation of faraway landscapes, people and culture which had apparently tremendous entrepreneurial potential.

By the 18th century, English fiction witnessed an almost overwhelming outpour of narratives, which had a 'travelling hero' and 'journey plots' creating an ambience in which the authors were perhaps undertaking real journeys or engaging in fictitious journeys. By the 19th century, the imperial exploits and colonial expansion had established Britain as one of the strongest powers as it defeated its contenders from Portugal, Spain and Holland. Victorian England appeared rather confident about its colonies, expansion, explorations and discovery of new worlds, which came to be represented through contemporary travel writing. Towards the final decades of the 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, English travel writing appeared to reveal affinity towards the imperial ideology of the crown–a

tendency which however, diffused eventually as there were growing doubts, anxieties and dissent regarding imperial practices which was led to incoherence and fragmentation in social, cultural and political beliefs of the people. Subsequently, travel writing of this period lacks 'homogeneity'.

It has been observed that travel writing has become a subjective form of writing by 20th century and has come to occupy the place of 'alternative writing' for the writers of fiction. In travel narratives then the reader now came across an impressionistic representation "with the interest focussed as much on the travellers' responses or consciousness as their travels". It is noteworthy that although there were changes in the formal structure of travel writing over the years, the thematic concerns of the genre generally appeared unaffected. The attempt of the travellers to 'know and see' an alien land and culture through the lens of their 'known' world–the 'double sphere of reference' became a discernible feature in the writing that emerged during this period. The political atmosphere of World War and growing ideological dissent intensified a sense of anxiety and doubt regarding Western civilising morale which created an atmosphere in which "even the most jingoist of travellers' tales could not always gloss over the conûicts at the heart of the white civilising mission." (Carr, 75). *In the Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Helen Carr observes:

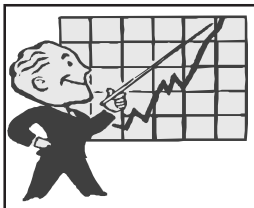
It is possible to see three stages of travel writing within this period. From 1880 to 1900, the long, 'realist' (not of course synonymous with reliable), instructive tale of heroic adventure remained dominant. In the years from 1900 to the First World War, the 'realist' texts have not disappeared, but much travel writing becomes less didactic, more subjective, and more literary. By the inter-war years, which saw a surge in the popularity of travel and travel writing, the literary travel book had become the dominant form: many of the best-known examples of the genre were written by writers equally or better known for their ûction or poetry. (75)

Owing to increased mobility and growth of communication and transport, the first half of the 20th century witnessed a production of travel writing that appeared 'aware of globalisation' – the phrase implying a situation wherein cultures and people met and mingled; a time when writers became

increasingly aware of the need to rethink and analyse the 'condition and value' of modern civilisation represented by the West. Thus, one may argue, like Mary Louise Pratt that during the 18th and 19th century travel writing 'produced "the rest of the world" for Europeans' (in Carr, 81). However, since the 19th century onwards, travel writing displays a growing apprehension that the exclusive otherness of Non-Western parts of the globe seems progressively diminishing – an effect of the homogenising narrative produced by the hegemonic discourse of the West. According to the Postcolonial approach, travel writing like other forms of writing, appears to disseminate 'difference' while the hegemonic practices of imperial culture served the agenda of legitimising and justifying the discriminatory norms of the empire. Critics and researchers in postcolonial studies are of the opinion that travel literature produced by the West intended to proliferate Western rhetoric of empire thereby contributing considerably towards the construction of the notions of identity and culture. One may then argue that postcolonial reception of travel writing as a generic form aims to challenge the Eurocentric approach to the form whereby the dominant culture's production of truth and knowledge is critiqued.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Marie Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) may be considered to have ushered in a new approach to travel writing studies while observing that there is a need to review the way in which West has been 'mapping and describing' the world that primarily was the non-West. Generally speaking, postcolonial travel writing in its narrow sense implies to those narratives of travel that have been authored by writers who belong to the former British colonies such as India, Pakistan, Africa and the West Indies. It is also necessary to keep in mind that although writers of Western origin may also belong to the postcolonial school, it is however, the writers without Western lineage and narratives that engage with issues related to race and ethnicity that are understood as postcolonial. It is against such a background that postcolonial travel narrative may be said to embrace travel from the margin to the centre where the former would mean the colony and the latter would imply the Europe or West. Instances of travel narratives that may be

understood as representing a journey from the periphery to the centre are Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) and Caryl Phillips' *The European Tribe* (1987); other form of postcolonial travel writing may include a narration of travel from centre to the margin as for instance *An Area of Darkness* (1964) or even travel writing such as that of Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* (1993) that engages with the representation of travel from one periphery to another.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q 5: What kind of travel writings are to be found in the 18th and 19th century English fiction?

Q 6: What changes occurred in the field of travel writing in the context of the 20th century?

Q 7: Which are the three stages in modern-day travel writings?

Q 8: In what ways, Edward Said and Marie Louise Pratt are considered to have ushered in a new approach to travel writing?

14.4 V S NAIPAUL: LIFE AND WORKS

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad, popularly known as V.S. Naipaul, was the son of Seepersad Naipaul and Droapatie Capildeo, and was born on 17th August, 1932 in Chaguanas, Trinidad. His forefathers had migrated to the Caribbean as indentured labourers to work in the sugar plantations towards the final decades of the 19th century. Naipaul's father became a journalist in *Trinidad Guardian* contributing English articles to the paper, and by 1932, he became a staff reporter from Chaguanas. Belonging to the farming community in Trinidad, Naipaul's father had a great respect for writers and their profession which perhaps motivated Naipaul to aspire to become a writer himself. Although Naipaul's descendents belonged to the Hindu Brahmin community, the Naipaul family was not very radical in terms of rituals and practices while they began adapting themselves to the new socio-cultural environment and eventually gave up communicating in Indian languages even at home. V. S. Naipaul began his school life in Port of Spain,

the capital of Trinidad and went on to win a scholarship after his graduation, which enabled him to study further at Oxford. By 1960s, after the completion of his education, he began travelling to the countries that were once colonies–he began observing these post imperial societies in South America, India, West Indies among others with an approach that was akin to the 'English tradition' quite unlike other contemporary postcolonial travel writers. It is perhaps for this attitude that Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* appears as the work of an author inhabiting the centre while 'beholding India in the periphery'.

Naipaul began his career working in the BBC for a brief period; his initial foray into the world of writing was initiated with *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *The Suffrage of Alvira* (1958) and *Miguel Street* (1959) – the plots of these three works of fiction, the last being a collection of short stories, were set in Trinidad and remarkable for their comic portrayal of character and events. The much-acclaimed novel *A House for Mr Biswas,* published in 1961, draws from the life of Naipaul's father. Published in 1963, *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* is Naipaul's first novel set in England. His later novels appear more politically informed as they engage with the colonial and postcolonial socio-cultural setting; issues related to decolonisation that prevail in such societies. Instances of such novels are *The Mimic Men* (1967), *In a Free State* (1971), *Guerrillas* (1975) and *A Bend in the River* (1979). Naipaul's autobiographical account of his life in England is narrated in *The Enigma of Arrival* published in 1987, which interestingly, appears to comprise elements of both fact and fiction. Such blend of fiction and non-fiction recurs once again in his experimental narrative dealing with a historical portraiture of the Caribbean titled *A Way in the World* (1994). India is the subject of study in three of Naipaul's non-fiction works – *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilisation* (1977) and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990); other non-fiction works by Naipaul include *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981), *A Turn in the South* (1989) *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions* (1998), *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies - British, French and Dutch in the West Indies and South America* (1962) and *The Loss of El Dorado: A History* (1969), *The Return of Eva Peron*

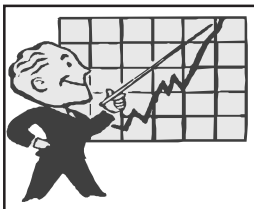
(1980), *The Writer and the World* (2002), *A Writer's People: Ways of Looking and Feeling* (2007). He was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001.

Naipaul is known for his rather uninhibited observations of culture and people, which has generated worldwide debate and discussion regarding his works. As an author comfortable with both fiction and non-fiction, his travelogues has presented him with worldwide recognition for his engagement with complex cultural processes, cultural difference while imagining the "strangeness of people in different places and times" (*Introduction*, Barnouw) From among the non-fiction works, *The Middle Passage*, *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilisation*, *Among the Believers*, *A Million Mutinies* and *A Turn in the South* are the books that are those that belong to the category of travelogues. These books represent Naipaul's concern about the notions of difference and divisiveness in societies embedded with a sense of cultural plurality; his critical stance regarding the socially, culturally and politically 'givens' in relation to a specific people within a specific territory; the discerning of a radical conventionalism set against an apparently threatening globalised economy, culture and politics that afflict these territories – Naipaul's works may be seen contemplating on these very relevant contemporary issues.

Owing to his somewhat obviously prejudiced understanding of 'development' which adheres to the Eurocentric model, and his reading of the postcolonial societies seen as 'lacking' in development, Naipaul has received harsh criticism from readers and critics alike. Critics are of the opinion that Naipaul while critiquing the postcolonial societies for their absence of progress and mediocrity of imagination seems to speak through the lens of 'English middle class' values which are again, in the real sense of the term seen as restrictive to comprehensive growth and development. This strange affinity towards the superior British culture may be attributed to Naipaul's childhood spent in 'little England'–the British colony of Trinidad where Naipaul and others like him imbibed the cultural values of the West. Thereafter, when he went to England for higher studies, he felt more close to the English than his own Indian community or even the West Indians –

this feature of his life is perhaps responsible in making him 'see' the world as he does; he seems to be less close to his 'own people' than that of the English.

In the Preface to *An Area of Darkness* Naipaul writes: "The travel for *An Area of Darkness* followed immediately on the writing of *The Middle Passage*…[t]he idea of the other form, non-fiction began to seem like a liberation…".Naipaul divides his non-fictional account of India into three parts and each part comprises several chapters. Reading *An Area of Darkness* would perhaps not be an easy task as it acquaints the reader with the complex traveller Naipaul whose idea of travel comprising the 'inside/outside' dichotomy is put to critical deliberations quite unlike other travelogues where one generally reads the account of the traveller's experience of coming from the familiar zone of 'home' and reaching the unfamiliar 'land' of strange culture and people. In Naipaul, the idea of familiarity associated with the image of 'home' and the notion of 'a sense of belonging' to one's place/race of origin is critically explored which unsettles the readers' embedded notions of the home and place of belonging.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Q 9: Name the books in which Naipaul takes India as his subject?

Q 10: How does the book *An Area of Darkness* provide Naipaul's ideas of travel?

14.5 READING THE CHAPTER I, SECTION I

The first section of *An Area of Darkness* comprises four chapters, which are as follows: A Resting-Place for the Imagination, Degree, The Colonial, Romancers. In this section, we shall try to read Chapter I of Section I

You will note that this book of Naipaul is the account of his 'discovery' of India, the first of his trilogies on India; he came to India in 1962 for the first time; the land of his ancestors spawned complex emotions in him as a result of which the book does not read like any other travel book–it reveals

Naipaul's rather challenging association with his idea of 'home'–the home that had been handed down to him through his ancestors. Until then, Naipaul had been growing up with an idea of India that had been conjured in his imagination woven through the memory of his forefathers handed down to him since his childhood. His physical encounter with India for the first time in the 1960s in relation to the emotive and ambiguous image of India that he had inherited from his forefathers as he grew up in Trinidad made him realise the discrepancies and gaps of the imagination and memory–it is perhaps such a realisation that makes Naipaul feel that he is a part of the native Indian crowd and apart from them as well.

The first chapter opens with Naipaul's vivid memory of the house he grew up in Trinidad where he remembered having seen 'India lay about […] in things: in a string bed or two, grimy, tattered, no longer serving any function…" (23). This image of India is almost similar to the image of India, which inhabits the consciousness of the author. After his travel to India of his forefathers, he could visualise "how a complete transference had been made from eastern Uttar Pradesh to Trinidad" (24). Naipaul provides the reader with an in-depth account of his ancestors' long journey to an alien land many years ago narrating how his "grandfather had made a difficult and courageous journey…several hundred miles from his village…he carried his village with him. A few reassuring relationships, a strip of land, and he could satisfyingly re-create an eastern Uttar Pradesh village in central Trinidad as if in the vastness of India" (25). The multicultural society in which the author was brought up appeared natural to him although he could see 'difference' in an around him in people and their lives and the way in which his family responded to such differences. Naipaul remembers "[t]he house we lived in was distinctive…we ate certain food, performed certain ceremonies and had certain taboos…permeated with a sense of difference…[though] race was never discussed; but at an early age I understood that Muslims were somewhat different than others…[e]very thing beyond our family had this quality of difference (26). Naipaul was invested with the image of India perhaps also through the rituals his grandmother performed – he recalls how the family had to make provisions for special

permission to satisfy his grandmother's desire to have a 'kattha' which was held under a pipal tree in the Botanical Gardens – he remembers the moment – 'it was a scene of pure pastoral'(27). Being the descendents of Hindu Brahmins, Naipaul's home was aplenty with pundits and they professed orthodox worldview. However, Naipaul asserts that he was born 'an unbeliever' and the ritual ceremonies could not incite Naipaul's interest as he "did not understand the language… the images did not interest [him]"(27) – eventually although growing in the midst of devout Hindus the author could not relate to the customs and beliefs of Hinduism; he 'remained totally ignorant of Hinduism'. However, for Naipaul his 'horror of the unclean' is the only trace of Hinduism that one may find in him. This horror of the unclean was especially in relation to his association with food and he recalls how prejudiced he was when it came to food. His experience in New York was miserable when he first landed there: "The day of my swift transportation to New York was a day of misery. I spent a frightened, hungry day in that city; and on the ship to Southampton I ate mainly the sweets…" (28)

Naipaul observes that caste system in Trinidad was not as brutal and unpleasant as it is in India. He appears to be sarcastic of the ritual of 'janaywa' or the thread ceremony, stating that it was no more than a 'piece of theatre'. In accounts such as these the picture that emerges of the author is that of an individual who appears to look down upon the ancestral traditions, only too eager to discern negative aspects of the community and blissfully happy about his disbelief and nonconformity with whatever his forefathers possessively held on to. However, Naipaul's memory of a certain day in a science class is significant as it makes the reader realise that the author also harboured a sense of loss–a sense of loss subtly permeated the lives of his people perhaps for being displaced from their 'roots'. Naipaul realises that this sense of loss in him particularly is his own doing and it is later in London that he realises that the sense of loss that he and his people had been experiencing was "the result of history and environment"(30). The family life, which apparently tried to hold on to the past, left behind in India gradually 'dissolved' and 'ceased to exist' by the time, the author was fourteen. His contact with India now enabled him to see the incongruities of

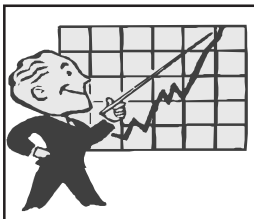
both the India of his imagination fed with the memories of his forefathers and the physical reality called India – this incongruity he believes is reflective of the truth that is inherent his critical attitude to the idea of 'home' associated with India.

Yet he is also disturbed by the fact that here in India, the land of a people apparently very possessive of their age old traditions appears to be gradually giving up their distinctive culture a reflection of which he finds in the replacing of the earthen lamps lit during Diwali with electric bulbs and candles. This sense of loss is perhaps due to the discrepancy that Naipaul finds between the India in his memory/imagination and the real India. The author is seen having fond memories of his association with Ramon a Hindu whom he befriends in London. The portrayal of Naipaul's relationship with Ramon reveals the complex emotions that individuals have while growing in a multiracial, multicultural society being displaced from their roots as it were – both the author and Ramon were leading similar lives in their search for a 'home' in world demarcated with differences. Naipaul acknowledges that the India that formed the backdrop of his childhood was the India that belonged to 'the imagination'. The real India, according to Naipaul consisted of several things that agitated him – Indian films, religion as it is practised here and the Indian people. In addition, having grown up in the somewhat candid environment of Trinidad, educated in London and living there for a substantial period now, the real act of facing the real India was rather frightening for him. In an overwhelming moment of his first trip to India, he realises that he becomes a part of the crowd – this experience of merging and being invisible in the social sphere was unique and first of its kind experience for the author. He describes this sensation thus:

And, for the first time in my life I was one of the crowd. There was nothing in my appearance or dress to distinguish me from the crowd…In Trinidad to be an Indian was distinctive. To be anything there was distinctive; difference was each man's attribute. To be an Indian in England was distinctive; in Egypt, it was more so. Now in Bombay I entered a shop or a restaurant and awaited a special quality of response. And there was nothing. It was like being denied part of my reality. Again and again I was caught. I

was faceless. I might sink without a trace into that Indian crowd. I had been made by Trinidad and England; recognition of my difference was necessary to me. I felt the need to impose myself, and did not know how. (39)

This passage perhaps best illustrates how Naipaul emerges as a distinct traveller from the conventional type; his difference lies in his approach to the land and its people; while asserting his own difference which he feels others ought to recognise, he appears to fail in that very quality as he too fails to recognise the different approach Indians have about people and life around them.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 11: What was Naipual's experience following his first encounter with India in 1960s?

Q 12: What things about India agitated Naipaul?

14.6 IMPORTANT THEMES

Some of the important themes that are notable in *An Area of Darkness* are discussed below:

Use of Memory:

Memory plays an important role in *As Area of Darkness*. The prescribed chapter reveals how Naipaul takes recourse to memory to work on his idea of India. He narrates extensively how the India of his imagination was conjured in him through memory not only his but significantly, of his ancestors' who had migrated to Trinidad years ago. It is in their memory that India survived and was handed down to the author. However, this India was one that existed in vacuum as he remembers that everything associated with India was hazy for him and 'dark'–darkness being metaphor for a kind of vagueness that surrounds the image of India, something that is unknown or unknowable. His idea of India emerges from his memory of the practices, customs, rituals and beliefs that his ancestors had adhered to in their life in Trinidad. This image is in contrast to what Naipaul finds when he comes to physical contact with the landscape. Memory plays an important role in all

postcolonial writing of which Diaspora forms an integral part. The postcolonial imagination attempts to retrieve the self-lost in the process of colonial representation. Displacement and the journey to find the 'home' from which displaced works with memory as in case of Naipaul where the act of physical journey is narrated simultaneously with his memory of the idea of 'home'.

Issue of Otherness:

Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* engages with the 'other' and the generic form of travel writing allows him the best possible scope to narrate his experience of encountering the 'Other'. However, a critic observes while reflecting upon otherness in Naipaul's narrative that here "the roles of self-Other are reversed in that it is the other who travels and describes a culture (Leon, 41). It is perhaps Naipaul's familiarity with displacement that 'home' becomes an important entity for him but his encounter with home does not seem to provide him with contentment – it is the otherness of his home that creates a sense of unease; the otherness is one reason why it becomes rather complicated for him to represent India as his 'home'. The otherness that Naipaul attempts to contemplate upon is one that creates a complex sense of self-definition as well – India is everything that Naipaul does not want to be. The author as the 'Other' here seems strangely to deny the Self its due place while making an attempt to define his multiracial, multicultural identity of which India forms a very integral part. In this context, one may refer to Carl Thompson's observation: "The 'others' that travellers use to discuss their difference, and implicitly their superiority, may also be drawn from their own culture. Even in the context of 'home travels', the traveller is by dentition a more mobile ûgure than many of the 'locals' he or she encounters, and on the basis of that fundamental difference travel writers often claim for themselves a greater breadth of knowledge, or a greater degree of sophistication, open-mindedness and/or modernity.(144)

Idea of the Third World:

Brought up in the British colony of 'little England' in Trinidad and having lived in England in his later life, Naipaul had very little affinity towards societies that were primarily non-Western. His unorthodox life at home, absence of institutionalised religion in his life, his dislike of rituals and especially

his acculturation among people in a multicultural social setup perhaps produced in him a unique sensibility which created a sense of disdain for societies where ethnicity, religion, socio-political identity were seen at problematic to the constitution of an individual's own sense of identity and belonging. Naipaul's journeys comprise his travels to the Third World countries such as India, Pakistan, Iran among others – the narration of his experience of 'coming back' to these societies and people does not seem very happy and satisfying. He feels that societies like those in India are ones where the individual leads a restricted life, impoverished in all sense of the term; experiencing an assault on individual rights while living a life of indignity. Critics are of the opinion that Naipaul's own upbringing in the English culture displaced from his 'home' makes him appear an 'outsider'; his reading of these societies thus seem prejudiced and at times very trivial as he fails to take note of the deep rooted philosophy of life that informs the Indian way of life.

14.7 STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Naipaul's prose is known for its straightforwardness – an aspect that one would not perhaps miss in his travelogue *An Area of Darkness*. The narrative style of the author appears truthful and radical; he does not seem to be careful about being politically correct in his making his statements. Although the idea of 'home' informs his writing, he is seldom 'at home' in his experience of India, which to him is 'an area of darkness'. Naipaul's vision is that of an outsider, prejudiced and ambiguous – he is unhappy with the way things work in India; his coming to India with the intention to 'seeing and knowing' it meets with disappointment in the very beginning as he finds himself lost in the faceless crowd. This disappointment with everything that concerns India is evident in his narration – the indignation and tedium that overpowers him throughout his travel and stay here is amply exemplified at his unease in the Churchgate Station at Bombay where is stands in utter disgust. His desire to 'impose himself' upon this land and the people reveals rather harsh attitude towards the land of his forefathers. It is not very clear what provokes Naipaul to such a defiant denunciation of India and her people.

Naipaul's affinity towards Western life is reflected in his narration of his experience of London: "I came to London. It had become the centre of my world and I had worked hard to come to it. And I was lost…it was a good place for getting lost in, a city no one ever knew…(38) The compassionate association with London where the author loses himself is in stark contrast to that of his experience at the Churchgate Station where too he was almost lost in the crowd. But, when he speaks of London he appears to be in awe of the place – a symbol of West's power, progress and status whereas Churchgate Station could only remind him of the eternal problems that afflict the people in India – the relentlessly hurrying crowds remind him of the struggle that these Third worldians face every day to make their both ends meet. The romantic idyllic vision of leisure and affluence that London brings to the mind is something that the author appears to be fascinated with; the more he comes closer to the Indian soil he is haunted by his memory of London, his 'fear' of India that colours his thought even before he could confront the 'real' India. In a voyeuristic manner, Naipaul represents India while he appears rather afraid to embrace it. It is needless to say that Naipaul is stunning in his use of words, his description of the travel and the accompanying emotions which appear flawless except for his subjective opinion about India and her people, would perhaps make the reader experience the feel of reading fiction



14.8 LET US SUM UP

Travel writing is an old practice, which was a familiar form of writing in the diaries and journals of explorers, scientists, religious preachers etc. Travel writing as a genre came to gain a concrete shape during the 16th century when the act of documentation came to gain momentum and every kind of travel and associated activity undertaken for varied purposes came to documented. The dominance of the West through the expansion of colonial rule also led to an increase in the act of physical travel. Recent approaches to travel writing consider travel as the West's attempt to look at the now-Western cultures through the hegemony of empire whereby a

discursive construction of the latter occurs. Such representation of the non-West is motivated politically as it projects the non-West as the 'other'—a marginal entity. V.S. Naipaul, who is known for both his fiction and non-fiction, discusses his first 'encounter' of India in his travelogue. India ought to have a special place in his mind owing to the fact that it is the land of his ancestors. However, as one goes through the book, it would emerge that the author appears rather disappointed with India, her people and their culture. Many critics read his attitude towards the land of his origin as a mark of his Eurocentric temperament. Despite its apparent shortcomings, Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* would remain a significant contribution to the wealth of travel literature.



14.9 FURTHER READING

Barnouw, Dagmar. (2003). *Naipaul's Strangers*. USA: Indiana University Press.

Holland, Patrick and Graham Huggan. (1998). *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Korte, Barbara. (2000). *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Kowaleski, Michael, (ed). (1992). *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Leon, Carol E. (2009). *Movement and Belonging: Lines, Places, and Spaces of Travel.* New York: Peter Lang.

Thompson, Carl. (2011). *Travel Writing*. London: Routledge,

Youngs, Tim. (2013). *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Web Resources:

http://www.english.hku.hk/courses/engl2045/week9.htm

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._S._Naipaul

https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/v-s-naipaul

14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: In travel writing, the author is generally a person who displays literary taste through which his narration of travel attains the quality of literature…. …in written records of travel, the writer keeps records of travel which read more like informative report writing such as guide books on travel and tourism brochures.

Ans to Q No 2: The author of travel literature is one in whom the desire to travel is inherent… …the author's treatment of travel in terms of narration should be such that his passion and spirit is reflected in a similar vein to that of any other form of literary writing of the author.

Ans to Q No 3: Books written by the Arab traveller Ibn Batutta… …Petrarch's *Mount Ventoux*… … Richard Haklyut's *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoueries of the English Nation… …*Sir Thomas Herbert's *Some Years Travels into Divers Parts of Africa and Asia the Great… ...Captain James Cook's maritime accounts… …*Charles Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* and so on.

Ans to Q No 4: Travel narratives help because the eye of the narrator who is most of the times an 'outsider', engages in the act of imposing identity on and meaning about the native and the society and culture thereof while 'silencing' the native. This stand towards travel literature is also quite identical to the feminist approach which looks at how literature had been engaging in 'silencing' the voice of the woman as the other – both the native and the woman needs to be represented, they cannot 'write' themselves.

Ans to Q No 5: The 18th century English fiction witnessed an outpour of narratives having a 'travelling hero' and 'journey plots'… … the journey might be real or fictitious… …by the 19th century, the imperial exploits

and colonial expansion made English travel writing appear to reveal affinity towards the imperial ideology of the crown.

Ans to Q No 6: Travel writing by 20th century occupied the place of 'alternative writing' for the writers of fiction… …In travel narratives then the reader now came across an impressionistic representation "with the interest focussed as much on the travellers' responses or consciousness as their travels".

Ans to Q No 7: The three stages of travel writing are: The long, 'realist' instructive tale of heroic adventure… …Following the World War I, much travel writing becomes less didactic, more subjective, more literary… …by the inter-war years, the literary travel book had become the dominant form, as many of the best known travel narratives were written by writers equally good for their fictional or poetic works.

Ans to Q No 8: Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Marie Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) ushered in a new approach to travel writing… …Postcolonial travel writing, to which they refereed, implies to those narratives of travel that have been authored by writers who belonged to the former British colonies such as India, Pakistan, Africa and the West Indies… …instances are Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) and Caryl Phillips' *The European Tribe.*

Ans to Q No 9: India is the subject of study in three of Naipaul's non-fiction works – *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilisation* (1977), and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990).

Ans to Q No 10: Naipaul in this book reflects on the idea of travel comprising the 'inside/outside' dichotomy quite unlike in other travelogues that provides an account of the traveller's experience of coming from the familiar zone of 'home' and reaching the unfamiliar 'land' of strange culture and people… …Naipaul, critically explores the image of 'home' and the notion of 'a sense of belonging' to one's place/race of origin.

Ans to Q No 11: His first encounter to the emotive and ambiguous image of India that he had inherited from his forefathers as he grew up in Trinidad, made him realise the discrepancies and gaps of the

imagination and memory… …such a realisation makes Naipaul feel that he is a part of the native Indian crowd and also apart from them in many ways.

Ans to Q No 12: The real India, according to Naipaul consisted of several things that agitated him–Indian films, religion as it is practised here, and the Indian people. And, having grown up in the somewhat candid environment of Trinidad, educated in London, and living there for a substantial period now, the real act of facing the real India was rather frightening for him. He realises that he becomes a part of the crowd–this experience of merging and being invisible in the social sphere was unique and first of its kind experience for the author.



14.11 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Trace the growth and development of travel writing as a distinct genre of non-fiction writing.

Q 2: Assess V S Naipaul's contribution to travel writing.

Q 3: Naipaul presents an outsider's view to India. Discuss *An Area of Darkness* (prescribed chapter) in terms of the given statement.

Q 4: Write a note on the history of travel writing. Account for the subjective turn in travel writing by the 20th century.

Q 5: Examine V. S. Naipaul's prose style as reflected in his travel writing *An Area of Darkness.*

Q 6: Analyse some important themes in Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness.*

Q 7: How does travel writing produce a sense of 'difference and affinity'?

Q 8: Why according to critics, is it difficult to arrive at a singular coherent definition of travel writing?

Q 9: What are the other forms of writing that may be accommodated within travel narratives?

Q 10: Where according to Naipaul, did his idea of India originate ? Discuss with reference to the text prescribed.

*** ***** ***



REFERENCES (FOR ALL UNITS)

Books:

Barnouw, Dagmar. (2003). *Naipaul's Strangers*. USA: Indiana University Press.

Edwards, Justin D. & Rune Graulund. (eds). (2011). *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Ellershaw, Henry. (ed.). (1922). *Keats: Poetry and Prose*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Fussell, Paul. (ed). (1987). *The Norton Book of Travel.* Norton and Co Inc

Gittings, Robert. (1970). *The Letters of John Keats: A Selection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holland, Patrick and Graham Huggan. (1998). *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Jones, John. (1969). *John Keats' Dream of Truth*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Korte, Barbara. (2000). *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Kowaleski, Michael, (ed). (1992). *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Newby, Eric. (1968). *A Short Walk in The Hindu Kush.* Great Britain: Penguin Books

Ridley, M. R. (1964). *Keats' Craftsmanship*. London: Methuen.

Rollins, Hyder E. (1958). *Letters of John Keats.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Thompson, Carl. (2011). *Travel Writing.* London: Routledge.

Youngs, Tim. (2013). *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Web Resources:

http://www.english.hku.hk/courses/engl2045/week9.htm

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._S._Naipaul

https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/v-s-naipaul

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Short_Walk_in_the_Hindu_Kush

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Newby

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1532127/Eric-Newby.html

http://theopencritic.com/?p=12

http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2006/oct/23/guardianobituaries.booksobituaries.

