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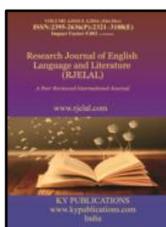
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**WHITE MUGHALS: LOVE AND BETRAYAL IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY INDIA BY
WILLIAM DALRYMPLE**

SYEDA FARHA SHAH

Asst. Professor English
MJCET, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad
Telangana, India.



ABSTRACT

The History of India is the fascinating epic of great civilization. It is a history of amazing cultural continuity which has reasserted itself again and again. Today it is the history of one – fifth of mankind which is, therefore, of importance to all. Both Indian and foreign historians have been attracted by this great theme and each generation has produced its own histories of India. Interest in India deepened in order to understand the religious dimension, and secularity had to be made room for. Travelling to India became equivalent to travelling to a colonial past, thus confronting colonial vestiges. India, therefore, becomes the perfect ground for realizing and imagining both the polarities of the past, which is rooted in the colonial and paradisiacal concepts of time. The pursuit of the paradisiacal is closely linked with “*Orientalism*” of the former colony, which explains those specimen of the seeking of pristine beauty and innocence with India. The disappointments and modernization of India, were considered as a sandwich between tradition and time.

Keywords: History, culture, colonialism, Orientalism

"The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are." -*Samuel Johnson*

Introduction

White Mughals, is a book that sees Indian religion as an alternative to the spirit of rational scepticism of the West. One of the book's central points is that learning about other cultures resolves a dissolving of strong centres of observation. It conveys that there was no uniform image of India – narratives differs not only due to the profession and personal backgrounds of the writer but also a series of social contexts and historical reasons shaping the narrative. What surprises Dalrymple is that he himself is the product of interracial liaison of the period and have Indian blood in his veins and describes it as:

No one in my family seemed to know about this, though it should not have been a surprise: we had all heard the stories of how our beautiful, dark-eyed Calcutta-born great-great-grandmother Sophia Pattle, with whom Bune-Jones had fallen in love, used to speak Hindustani with her sisters and was painted by Watts with a rakhi – a Hindu sacred thread – tied around her wrist. (xli)

He is also surprised to see the enthusiasm with which people engage in their religion as a significant center of life. The book records the religious practices history of the land, the geographic, political, or economic aspects of Hyderabad. Dalrymple seeks a self understanding by examining an alien culture; on the other hand Naipaul constructs a hierarchy of civilizations. The narrative voice is restrained, in his own words to that of an outsider. The observation of ossified

customs and rituals of a two thousand years old tradition that adheres to rules that sustain a system of belief, and security in the observations. It is interesting to ask at this point, given the antiquity of the religion, what the nature of transculturation has been. Dalrymple does not see the painful hybridity that Theoroux or Naipaul sees. He insists that modernity is accepted on its own terms. This is a change from a writer like Foster, who constructs the other in terms of a limiting inherited past. When an academic historian goes visiting and is self-conscious about his own identity, there is an attempt to look at his own history in a new light.

Myth and History: *White Mughals* is a travelogue about the disappearing Christians of the Middle East, and their moving through the streets of Hyderabad. The book is a work of social history about the relations that existed between the British and Indians in the eighteenth and early Nineteenth century. It shows the interracial relations between British Officers, such as Major General Charles Stuart and Indian women, and the politics of late 18th century India.

The title of *White Mughals* clearly indicates its theme that the late 18th and early 19th century period in India had 'a succession of unexpected and unplanned mingling of peoples and cultures and ideas.' At one stage, the book shows the tragic love story of James Kirkpatrick and Khair-un-Nisa. On the other hand, the story deals with the trade, military and political dealings. Dalrymple tries to draw the attention of the reader by presenting a fascinating picture of sexual attitudes and social etiquette, finding an 'increasingly racist and dismissive attitude' among the British ruling class towards mixed race offspring, after the rise of Evangelical Christianity.

The author reveals open-mindedness to religion and culture. Yet the ritualistic aspect of the religion is narrated with increasing frequency, like the birth of a baby, the extraordinary rites that accompany and the mournful period of Muharram. Besides, his understanding of the religion is free from stereotyping. He speculates the tradition of giving 'Azan' in the ears of a new born as:

On the day of delivery, almost as soon as the baby had been cleaned and swaddled,

the call to prayer, the Azan, would be recited into the babe's right ear, followed by the kalmia (or creed) which would be read into the left. (337)

In his *White Mughals*, Dalrymple presents how James Achilles was attracted to the culture of the city of Hyderabad so much that he had started dressing like the local people and eating their foods, attending to their functions which is apt to the title of the book, *White Mughals*. He illustrates with copious examples a peculiar phenomenon occurring from the time the Europeans arrived in India. The Portuguese, the French, the British were attracted by the culture and lifestyle of India. Many of these foreigners began adopting the Indian ways of dress and food habits. Many too fell in love with the Indian women and married them. This phenomenon continued for about two hundred years and upto the time of Lord Wellesley, who began to discourage such activities. Dalrymple used the term 'White Mughals' to condemn such individuals, who strayed from the path of Christianity.

Dalrymple has skilfully interwoven two threads throughout his book *White Mughals*. He throws light on the career and love story of James Kirkpatrick and actual various historical figures such as Tippu Sultan, Nana Phadnavis, the Nizam of Hyderabad, his crafty minister AristuJah, Warren Hastings, Lord Wellesley who flutter across the landscape in this book. There are plenty of details like the wars against the Marathas, was against Tippu Sultan, local religious customs that fascinates the readers.

The story has a romantic beginning but its ending is on a sad note. James Kirkpatrick, the British resident and Khair-un-Nissa have two children, one male and one female. They were sent to England to be brought up there, as they had no career in India being Anglo-Indians, due to the revised policies of the East India Company. Dalrymple explores the fact that British came to India for trade, and they established their trading centers at different places in India but the centers of their political power remained in the presidency towns of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, each being governed by a separate governor.

Conclusion

The book *White Mughals* rode a wave of popularity unprecedented in the history of India, particularly Hyderabad. Dalrymple was discussed with interest not only by ordinary readers but by literary critics as well. The passage of time has sobered the uncritical enthusiasm and created a space for balanced critical judgement. The novel *White Mughals* challenges the authority of imperial textuality and disrupts the cultural and linguistic stability of the colonizing centre. It shows an alternative way of conceiving history that break down barriers between cultures. It broke away not only from the earlier tradition of historical novel but also from the Western depictions of history of India as one finds in the works of Paul Scott, E.M.Foster and V.S.Naipaul. Dalrymple's *White Mughals* has a thematic and stylistic concerns calling for a new experimental strategy which is mirrored in its mode of narration and complex mixture of narration. The novel brings together public and private events, history, myth and legends, tragedy and scathing satire.

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