

## Preface

Although travel writing precedes the novel as a genre by not less than a few centuries, it had always eluded critical attention on its nature and function till post-colonial studies brought forward the serious social, political and cultural implications of the genre of travel writing. Consequently, the genre, erstwhile known as only an innocuous form of popular literature, has given rise to a number of essential questions in the post-imperial period that have engaged its practitioners and critics alike.

Thus, the contemporary critics and readers of travel writing have become equally concerned with the questions regarding the genre like the extent to which travel writing had become 'complicit' with the operations and perceptions of the European Imperialism in the colonial days; or whether the eurocentric perceptions and practices are still functional within the frame of the genre. Besides, there are other queries too related to travel writing, such as its disavowal of social responsibility, its exhibition of a certain moral arrogance, and its preference for the accounts of elite travelers by marginalizing those of the underprivileged and faceless travelers, that have appeared to haunt the genre in the post-colonial context.

Unlike travel writing, the English novel, on the other hand, has been enjoying its share of both the critical and the popular attention almost since its flowering in the nineteenth century. However, an analysis of the genre in the post-colonial context finds it to be as guilty of complicity with European imperialism as is travel writing. Moreover, in the presence of a unique writer like V. S. Naipaul, a literary master who is often denounced for a supposed exhibition of eurocentrism in his writings, the scene becomes yet more intriguing and invites an analysis of the ambivalent nature of post-colonial fiction.

Amitav Ghosh, on the other hand, remains another remarkable post-colonial writer whose works have received as much critical acclaim in the recent time. However, even though Ghosh exhibits a world view in his work that appears to involve most of the major concerns in Naipaul, the observations of these writers more than often appear contrasted when placed side by side.

The present study situates the genre of travel writing in the context of fiction of Naipaul and Ghosh, both of them famous for their novels and travelogues alike, to conduct a threefold analysis. First, the study wants to examine travel writing's viability as a socio-political or cultural critique in the post-imperial scene as expressed in Naipaul and Ghosh.

Secondly, it tries to assess the role and nature of contemporary fiction regarding its socio-political or cultural representations and enquiries when placed in the context of post-colonial studies. Thirdly, the dissertation also attempts to explore the extent of variety and complexity of post-colonial literature in its interpretation of the pre-/post-/colonial cultures and societies through the study of these two famous post-colonial writers who are similar in so many ways yet exhibit such a great contrast.

While conducting this threefold analysis, the dissertation focuses only on those novels of Naipaul and Ghosh that have thematic relevance to the study. Thus the novels of Naipaul and Ghosh to be studied in this thesis are characterized by a hybridized form in their incorporation of travel writing in their structure while they primarily portray those cultures and societies most affected by the practice and demise of European order of imperialism and colonialism