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EXPATRIATE NARRATIVES OF THE CITY OF DELHI

Abstract

The city's expatriate population has been steadily on the rise in India. There are several narratives that are born out of foreign presence in global cities, and Delhi is no different. While we derive a sense of expatriate life and times in Delhi cumulatively from a clutch of sources like forums of shared experience and information and blogs, interviews, articles, and reports etc., expatriates in Delhi have also found the urge and the ethos to write longer narratives. This paper examines some of the best known examples of expatriate novels located in Delhi with the objective of placing Delhi on the map of important urban-global narrative trajectories traced by the expatriate novel. The above inquiry suggests that Delhi is an important world capital on crisscrossing loci of rapid and incessant global flux. It has dazed and enticed the global jet-setters in equal measures. The expatriate's gaze is the Lacanian gaze where the gazed object does not remain mute or inanimate but speaks back to the gazer in a reciprocal relationship. As the expatriate feels objectified and marooned in an alien city, she also gazes back at the city as a resistive tool to manage her objectified otherness. It is a rewarding project to study the Delhi based expatriate writing of William Dalrymple, Sam Miller, Dave Prager, Rana Dasgupta and Raza Rumi as it is rich with voices, strategies, issues and images that are resonant and iridescent with meaning for not only expatriates and trans-nationals but also for every resident, settler, writer and thinker associated with Delhi.

Keywords: Delhi, expatriate novel, lacanian gaze, City of Djinns, Sam Miller

The city's expatriate population has been steadily on the rise in India. The seventh Expat Explorer study commissioned by HSBC Bank International Ltd. India reports that India is home to the second largest proportion of highly paid expats in the world, after China, and is ranked ninth by expatriates looking for a well-balanced, high-quality lifestyle (Ghosh, 2017). Standing testimony to the burgeoning expatriate numbers, there are innumerable adjustment agencies and relocation companies offering services to this niche clientele. The increased number of expatriate population is also visible in Delhi. In the 1980s, a foreigner was an oddity in Delhi. This rare breed comprised primarily of some diplomats and a few journalists mostly sighted near Chanakyapuri, or at the other end of the spectrum, emaciated hippies found in Paharganj. But over the turn of the millenium, 'foreigners' have become fairly common in many neighborhoods in south Delhi. Earlier the few expatriates around were predominantly white, in white-collared jobs and at the top of the food chain in Delhi economy and society. In recent times, the expatriate population is ethnically and professionally diverse and many Indian incomes now compare favourably with expatriate earnings. There are several narratives that are born out of foreign presence in global cities, and Delhi is no different. There are groups/forums/communities of shared experience and information like yuni-net etc. There are blogs, interviews, articles, and reports on the topic almost every day. These Delhi diaries include some fairly common refrains like Delhi vs. Mumbai, fear vs. fascination, corruption vs. convenience, debilitating pollution vs. enjoyable weather, congestion and civic nightmare vs. beautiful spots of greenery and history, strange culture vs. genuine warmth, streets/roads bedlam vs. gated conclaves of expatriate residence and recreation. In this sense, Delhi is a choice expatriates face and make on a daily basis. As one blog very perceptively mentions, expatriates in Delhi go through five phases in the process of settling down- pre-arrival panic, post-arrival panic, putting on weight with delicious Delhi food rather than going down with diarrhea as anticipated, expat swag upon finding feet in Delhi and departure depression (Kalra, 2016). In a nutshell, the expatriate story has a beginning, a middle and an end and is recorded quite often with bewilderment, adventure, triumph, and nostalgia.

While we derive a sense of expatriate life and times in Delhi cumulatively from these numerous sources, a longer and sustained narrative in the form of a novel takes us into directions less topical. We are now into the much debated and deliberated genre of the expatriate novel which is located in the fundamental assumption of global mobility, but has

traversed so many trajectories that it offers a whole spectrum of approaches to the negotiation of identity that takes place in the process of mobility. At the simplest level, as Kaitlyn Moore classifies, the expatriate novel charts either the course of integration or isolation:

The best novels about expatriates describe the struggles and accomplishments of the characters while providing a rich, detailed journey into another culture. Just as in real life, expatriate characters deal with stressors and fears unlike any they experienced in their home country and cope with these stressors in a variety of ways. Some characters are shown as ripe for dynamic change and personal growth while others authors show character turning inward and allowing themselves to be limited by loneliness, their own narrow-mindedness, and the intrigues of the expat community. Some are most concerned with portraying the new country and a dynamic character's integration into that country, while some narrow down to their characters' isolated bubble (Moore, 2014).

At the generic level, the expat novel has accumulated innovations and improvisations to emerge what can be called "world novel" (Caren, 2011). From the primarily erotic or romantic journey of self-discovery, the expat novel has taken upon itself the task of flag-posting international issues in what is called the "do-gooder's novel". We can today also think of a category of novels where the expats relocate to so-called home-turf but home is not the same as national identity, life abroad and mutated self collide against each other in a triangulated struggle. The fourth variant is born when the erstwhile consumerist expatriate self-consciously metamorphoses into a "new nomad" or a world citizen with detached political and institutional sensibility. As is generally accepted in genre theory that a genre shifts with the introduction of new semantic material, this material in the case of expatriate novel comprises of geopolitical consciousness especially of disparities in the global world as well as the effect of these differences on the mobile and resident global subject. Expatriates in Delhi have also found the urge and the ethos to write longer narratives. This paper examines some of the best known examples of expatriate novels located in Delhi with the objective of not only placing Delhi on the map of these important urban-global narrative trajectories but also for exploring how Delhi and the expatriate constitute a mutually questioning and constructing gaze.

Dalrymple's *City of Djinn*s is the most celebrated novel in this category, often figuring in the "must-read" books on Delhi. Ironically, it has not been examined in detail from this

perspective. Dalrymple's first visit to the city was as a seventeen year old in the year 1984 when he found himself transported from the Scottish moors to a place which was "so totally unlike" anything he had seen before. (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 7) He recalls,

Delhi, it seemed at first, was full of riches and horrors: it was a labyrinth, a city of palaces, an open gutter, filtered light through a filigree lattice, a landscape of domes, an anarchy, a press of people, a choke of fumes, a whiff of spices. (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 8)

Delhi has evoked the same response in travelers before Dalrymple like Percival Spear and continues to baffle and befuddle most first time visitors even to this date. Working at a home for the destitute, he utilized his afternoons in exploring the interiors of both the Old and the New Delhi. What he saw and discovered sowed the seeds of a lifelong passion and involvement with the city's legendary fecundity and tenacity. Most affected by the treasure trove of history and stories woven in the landscape of the city, he knew that in Delhi he "...had found a theme for a book: a portrait of a city disjointed in time, a city whose different ages lay suspended side by side as in aspic, a city of djinns". (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 9) During the five intervening years between this first visit and the next, Dalrymple wrote *In Xanadu*, a wanderjahr which narrates a replay of Marco Polo's odyssey from Jerusalem to Xanadu performed in the thirteenth century with the aim of converting the great Mongol emperor to Christianity. Touching many famous cities of the silk route like Israel, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan & China, *In Xanadu* compares the erstwhile exotic splendor of the cities to their present physical and political decline. The book hailed Dalrymple's arrival on the English literary scene as a major voice fetching rave reviews and prestigious awards.

Travel narratives have been an age old medium of observing and documenting the cultures of places. Rober Burgin defines travel narrative as a "book in which one or more travelers take a voluntary trip to one or more places and share their personal thoughts, perceptions, reactions and experiences. These narratives are intended to be read and enjoyed in a linear manner, from start to finish, and not referred to simply on as-needed basis." (Burgin, 2013: Introduction, xiv). Since the inception of travel writing, the traveler's gaze has been objectified in the records produced of beauty, topography, climate, nature, people, cultures, rulers and governments of faraway and forbidden places constituting memory, knowledge and control both for them and their readers. The full title of the book, *City of Djinns- A Year in Delhi*, he decides to write on his second visit to Delhi in the year 1990, this time on a professional journalistic assignment and married to Olivia Fraser, alerts us to the fact that

unlike *In Xanadu*, this is going to be an expatriate account. The longer period of stay in his place of voluntary residence (as against involuntary residence in literature of exile) draws attention to two processes. The time frame like “A Year or Two...” indicates a sense of discovery and cultivated familiarity in the land of chosen residence. The prolonged stay offers greater leisure and opportunity to “explore” and “live” a place and not just see it. In the case of Dalrymple, even though it is not his first visit to Delhi, yet it is his first visit long enough to allow him a meaningful immersion in the ambience of Delhi. Though a product of six years of stay and research in the city, the year referred to in the title of the book is the first eventful year of the Dalrymples’ arrival in India. Now the gaze looks beyond the sensuous. The “Year” is present in the narrative not just in the shape of its events but also in the shape of circadian and climatic rhythms. The seasonal cycle which unfolds with so much variety that it presents an added challenge to the adaptability of travelers from moderate climes is a sizeable part of the foreigner’s experience in Delhi. An extended stay also involves the process of arriving, acclimatizing, and integrating in the life of the new place- something that does not concern a short stay tourist. Short stay tourists choose to live in hotels and are not faced with the logistical issues of buying/renting house, hiring helps, obtaining licenses and permissions or learning local languages. Expatriate writing in this sense is what David Edward Gibbons calls “place writing” (Gibbons, 2015). Movement here is the cause, but place writing is the consequence of stasis. Gibbon calls it a sub-genre of travel writing which is primarily practiced by “those who have travelled and discovered a new environment and chosen to settle there” and “which seeks to innovate by staying put rather than moving”. Michael Cronin refers to it as “vertical” travel writing.

The difference, thus, between travel writing and place writing is that concept of “place” emerges not through the fleeting, sensuous gaze of the traveler but an engaging gaze of a settler. In case of Dalrymple’s *City of Djinnns*, the gaze is rather of someone needing to settle in a new city as an expatriate. In that sense, “place writing” metamorphoses into the more specific form of “city writing”. The focus falls primarily on the urban atmosphere and the favored techniques range from “psychogeography” to similar interpretations of abstract “ambience” into tactile “influence” as the process iterates the city into being and the city-zen into being “there”. For instance, Lindsay Bremner (2010), bases her writing the city of Johannesburg in *Writing the City into Being: Essays on Johannesburg*, on the belief that a city becomes a city just the way a book becomes a book. What readership is to a book, city-dwelling is to a city. The real city is a compendium of routines, gestures, desires, textures, sounds, shadows, light, glamour, noise

and money - a city accessible only through lived practices of walking, loitering, playing, commuting, seeing, hearing, knowing, talking etc. Living amid a different people confronts the complacent sense of self of the expatriate as it stands out in sharp relief against the sense of other. The interactive experience of the life in the new city both through the many penetrative forms mentioned above and the expressive forms of place writing and city writing proves useful and powerful in redefining and realigning the sense of self in the context of the other- in this case the new city.

Writing to himself, fellow expatriates and the transnational community, Dalrymple's city writing in *City of Djinnns* also negotiates with a few more tropes born out of voluntary contemporary global mobility. He borrows his eye for the cultural calendar and customs of the city like festivals, marriages, arts, recreations and parties much from a cultural tourist. Cultural tourism is broadly understood to mean the "movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs". (Richards, 2003) Cultural needs of the postmodern tourists are neither easily defined nor satisfied. The postmodern tourist or post-tourist is characterized by plurality- plurality of modes of transfer including virtual ones, plurality of interests, plurality of choices and plurality of experiences. With the collapse of categories like 'high culture' and 'low culture' and 'culture' and 'society' to merge in an overarching approach to culture as a way of life, the postmodern tourist has become what is called the 'cultural omnivore' (Peterson, 1992). It refers to a category which consumes both high culture and popular culture with equal appetite. The post-modern cultural omnivore tourist has become more and more educated and discerning to want "authentic" culture, shunning the bottled and packaged variety of commodified culture with boredom and distaste. As Richards illustrates, what also lies at the base of all these shifts in the patterns of cultural consumption is the basic "experience hunger" that characterises postmodern societies (Richards, 2003). Thus, the post-modern tourist is the architect of her/his own cultural museum and meaningful experience. The practical tool-kit and expressive idiom in the post-tourist discourse is provided by immersion journalism. Writes Robin Hemley in *A Field Guide for Immersion Writing: Memoir, Journalism, and Travel*,

Immersion writing engages the writer in the here and now in a journalistic sense, shaping and creating a story happening in the present while unabashedly lugging along all that baggage that makes up the writer's personality: his or her memories, culture, and opinions. (Hemley, 2012, p.8)

As in immersion journalism, the writer uses the Self to write about the World, the ultimate reality for the post-tourist accordingly is the experiential reality.

William Dalrymple's *City of Djinnns* engages with the city of Delhi at all the many levels mentioned above. The overpowering feeling of otherness which any new city arouses is responsible for expatriates like Dalrymple to get out there and try and explore and understand all that they can to let their self be at peace and if possible, at home. While Delhi is a mystery/muddle to begin with, the plot only thickens on Dalrymple's second coming for he sees rapid fire physical and cultural changes taking place all around him. He notes that the world of nationalism, socialism and non-alignment stand replaced by capitalism, liberalization and globalization. Along with the entrepreneurial success of the refugee settlers, heaps of money are being made and waiting to be made in Delhi from the license and land mafia. Setting up of manufacturing industries and service industries give the city a commercial character. The low-rise colonial capital gives way to "Legoland blocks" of residential and corporate space, congestion, pollution and slums. As the western goods inundate the Indian market, morality and attitudes also undergo a concomitant change. Similarly, attitudes, especially of the increasingly affluent and powerful middle class, were becoming less tolerant and more fascist. Arriving as a British journalist, on a four-year assignment to report for the London-based Sunday Correspondent and The Spectator, he leaps into the project of writing Delhi. The prologue is born out of the otherness resonant in the indescribable quality of the city. Dalrymple uses a mystic aura and idiom to try and describe it:

...When I met Pir Sadr-ud-Din, ... I learned the secret that kept the city returning to new life. Delhi, said Pir Sadr-ud-Din, ws a city of djinnns. ... The reason for this, said Sadr-ud-Din, was that the djinnns loved Delhi so much that they could never bear to see it empty or deserted. To this day every house, every street corner was haunted by them. You could not see them, said Sadr-ud-Din, but if you concentrated you would be able to feel them: to hear their whisperings, or even, if you are lucky, to sense their warm breath on your face. (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 9)

Dalrymple's act of "interpreting reality" of the city is characterized by the postmodern experiential penchant for accumulation, selection and immersion (Dalrymple, 2005). He witnesses the Dusshera festival and records his response to the spectacle on display in a wry, amused fashion. There is no attempt to relinquish the high horse of the cultural outsider. He retells the Ramayana like a gleeful heretic with irreverent brevity:

According to the legend, Ravana kidnapped Sita, Ram's bride, and carried her off to Lanka, his island fortress. There he tried a number of strategies to enroll her into his splendid harem. But with the help of Hanuman, the Monkey God, Ram leaped across the straits to Lanka, rescued Sita, and after an epic struggle lopped off all ten of the demon's heads. (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 46)

His mixed bag of Delhi experiences gets fuller as he sheds his characteristic gaze at a New Year party, a *nikah* ceremony, popular but dying arts like calligraphy, partridge fight and pigeon flying. The rule on the road that might is right, the general tenor of interaction of employees with domestic servants, the reverence which his driver Balvinder Singh has towards the ambassador car, the Indianisms in speech, matrimonial advertisements, "marriage fraud" specialist detective agencies and obituaries are only a few among the many gems of Delhi culture which he keeps on sampling during his day to day interactions. It becomes imperative for Dalrymple to track the footprints of Partition on Delhi's cultural landscape as he realizes that "the events of 1947 were the key to understanding modern Delhi" (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 44). He witnesses the debacle of Shahjahanabad from the once throbbing epicenter of Delhi culture to a bustling wholesale market. He lands up in Karachi on this cultural trail to meet a host of dislocated and relocated Shahjahanabadis, or Delhi exiles as they are called, to find how they still live in the same Delhi streets of childhood in their imaginations much like the Palestinians. He also meets in Karachi a very embittered Ahmed Ali who now considers neither Pakistan nor India as "home". Dalrymple's cultural route is similarly eclectic and assorted. Dalrymple includes several explorations and interviews in his Delhi odyssey which are similarly idiosyncratic. He commences his explorations with the most recent event which shatters Delhi's peace-assassination of Indira Gandhi and riots which followed in 1984- to proceed historically backwards, going all the way back to Delhi proto-history. He covers Independence and Partition in 1947, the building of New Delhi, 1857, Pax Britannica, the Mughal Twilight, Shahjahanabad, the Turkish dynasty, Sufism, and Delhi prehistory. Dalrymple seeks out unconventional memoirs from India and abroad to fill in the voids in canonical history. Punjab Singh relives Partition; Shamim, Begam Hamida Sultan, Ahmed Ali, Dr Jaffery recollect the lost glories of Shahjahanabad; Iris Portal remembers Civil Lines Delhi Society as embodiment of the paradox of Imperialism; the Haxby sisters, Norah Nicholson, Captain James Skinner symbolize the fate of the misfit European and Anglo-Indian populations; the chance discovery of Fraser's letters in Fraser House in Moniack (Scotland) provides rare glimpse into early days of British occupancy in Delhi; Mr Prashad

and Mr Andrews shed light on the total neglect of the Residency and Fraser's Bungalow by leveling the same allegation of Indians lacking a sense of history; Abdul Jamil Khan-the hakim in Ballimaran- represents a tribe extant now only in India which guards the age old secrets of Unani medicine; Pir Sadruddin extols the mystic tradition of Sufism in Delhi and India and Prof B Lal expounds the historicity of Mahabharata. The choice of historical sources by Dalrymple is also off the beaten track as he prefers traveler accounts and memoirs over court or scholarly accounts. He refers to Ibn Batuta, Hawking, William Franklin, James Forbes, Emily Bayley, Dargah Quli Khan, Bernier, Manucci etc. for "sharper and livelier pictures". (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 191) He validates the erased and censored parts of court narratives like bazaar gossip, drama, scandal and intrigues as indispensable to a multidimensional picture.

He visits many more places like Feroz Shah Kotla, Chandni Chowk, Turkman Gate, Sitaram Bazar, Coronation Park, Lutyens' Delhi, St James Church, Safdarjung's tomb, Roshanara Garden, Red Fort, Begampur, Tughlaqabad, Ballimaran, Nizamuddin, Hauz Khas, Maqan-i-khizr in Mehrauli, Old Fort and Nigambodh Ghat. At places like Begumpur, residents live in insouciant oblivion of the heritage in their neighborhood. He threads his way through these pieces of jigsaw puzzle lying buried under busy settlements to piece together a continuum of urban history of Delhi. For a well travelled person like him, comparisons are inevitable. He finds shadows of Palestine in the loss inscribed in the psychogeography of Shahjahanabad by Partition and of Nuremberg in the fascist, imperialist streaks inscribed in the grandeur of Lutyens' Delhi. The emphasis is on how Delhi speaks to him and others like him. The dialogue is not really through empathetic amalgamation of mutual identities but through careful sanitization of otherness and separateness. The lens is of the ideal expatriate writer, who satiates personal and public fetish of authentic flavor by gazing "only and always (as) a visitor, exclusively and passionately an outsider" (Field, 2006, p. 40)

The Delhi experience leaves him with a few posers which he follows up in his yearlong expeditions in and around Delhi. These posers revolve around some irreconcilable contradictions- first, the generally mild, gentle and courteous Delhiwalla can commit appalling acts of brutality and apathy and secondly, the city with a historic reputation of being the most cultured city also has the notoriety of rising in mindless, bigoted violence. Another conundrum he seems to be grappling with is the arrival and departure of the British from India. Dalrymple elides over the political, economic and hegemonic domination by the British over India with the objective of "ameliorating the British presence in India, and does so by constructing a

particular representation of the Raj” (Dorgelo, n.d.). Iris Portal talks of British imperialism as a paternalistic, evolutionary presence which quietly faded at the end of the day. He mentions the empire in binaries like its “failings” and its “genius”, thus, not letting the idea of the good inherent in the empire fall out of the reckoning. (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 85) The imperial experience is projected entirely through women who come across as vulnerable victims who have had to put up with a lot of hardships. Dalrymple portrays the British in two categories- the Frasers and the Metcalfes. While the former stands for eccentric fusion and enigmatic waywardness of the early British period in Delhi from 1803 to 1850, the latter represents stiff lipped propriety and starched evangelicalism of the mid-nineteenth century. He portrays the likes of Ochterlony, Frasers, Seton and Skinner as trans-nationals who transcend cultural and linguistic divides with felicity. This possibility “of a happy fusion of the British and Indian culture”, however, he says was nipped by the arrival of the new creed of Metcalfes and then the 1857 uprising (Dalrymple, 1993, 2004, p. 147). Dalrymple endorses the possibilities inherent in the former over the damage done by the latter. Through this categorisation and valorisation, he posits a neo-benign evaluation of British imperialism in India looking at the Raj experience as a cultural fiasco rather than an economic and political atrocity. He exonerates himself from the imperialist crimes of his ancestors by privileging extenuating narratives and also by stressing his Fraser lineage by marriage and temperament. Unraveling these riddles, finding enabling narratives and discovering signs and symbols hidden in the depth of its history and geography, therefore, constitute Dalrymple’s holy grail in the city of djinns making him an expatriate, culturalist, historian and descendant of the Raj all at the same time. Thus, the portrait of the city mediated through his self is a unique picture of a struggle with one’s inner demons or djinns before it becomes a struggle with a city.

Sam Miller is another expatriate who negotiates the city with a different gait, but the same outsider’s osmotic gaze, flowing fluidly between space, self and spectator. A self-avowed *flâneur*, he traverses Delhi on foot. After studying History in Cambridge and Politics at School of Oriental and African Studies, he comes to live in this city in the early 1990s as a journalist for two and a half years. His initial impression of Delhi is that it lacks energy and identity of its two significant others- Mumbai and Kolkata. It seems an irritable and disinterested city. He returns to Delhi in 2003 on what is to be a six months assignment as the BBC editor, Current News Affairs, South East Asia but is seduced by the charms of this city to make Delhi his ‘home’. Writing *Delhi: Adventures in a Megacity* in 2008, Miller says it has taken him almost two decades to “come to terms with that vacillating attraction and repulsion (he feels) for this monstrous, addictive city”. (Miller, 2008, p.4) Following in the footsteps of his idiosyncratic

illustrious expatriate Dalrymple, he says he has roamed the streets of the city like “a man possessed” (Miller, 2008, p. 4). He opts to walk in the city because it is the most distinguishing biological trait of the mammalian species of the homosapiens. Apart from its physical benefits, it also rewards the *flâneur* by taking him to places where others would not dare to tread. Delhi streets are no cakewalk, especially for a ‘foreigner’, but a large part of Delhi life is lived in the open and the sheer density and intensity of experience available on its streets cannot be grasped in any other way.

The generic figure of the “*flâneur*” popularized by writers like Baudelaire and Benjamin employs a particular type of gaze. While the term “*flânerie*” dates back to the 16th century meaning idling or strolling, in the 19th century it comes to codify a new relationship of city-zens with their increasingly complex post- industrialization urban environments. Since then, the *flâneur* has been used to articulate the modern urban experience, urban spectatorship, class tensions and gender divisions, alienation and forms of mass culture inherent in city structure. In the 1860s, in the midst of the rebuilding of Paris under Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann, Charles Baudelaire presented a memorable portrait of the *flâneur* as the artist-poet of the modern metropolis:

The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. (Baudelaire, 1863, 1964, p. 9)

Walter Benjamin adopted the concept of the urban observer both as an analytical tool and as a lifestyle. From his Marxist standpoint, Benjamin describes the *flâneur* as a parallel to the advent of the *tourist*. Quite like his own personality, Benjamin’s *flâneur* is an uninvolved but highly perceptive bourgeois dilettante. He describes him thus:

The crowd was the veil from behind which the familiar city as phantasmagoria beckoned to the *flâneur*. In it, the city was now landscape, now a room. And both of these went into the construction of the department store, which made use of *flânerie* itself in order to sell goods. The department store was the *flâneur's* final

coup. As *flâneurs*, the intelligensia came into the market place ... they took the form of the bohème. (Benjamin, 1935: 170)

The *flâneur*, thus, is not a street urchin but a member of the elite upper class whose wealthy and vagrant lifestyle gives him an opportunity to venture out in the anonymity of the throbbing metropolis to experience voyeuristically the kaleidoscopic hues of city life. His intellectual orientation imparts to him an air of detachment and dissociation. The *Flâneur's* detached and documenting gaze is directed mainly to the behavior and deportment of people, the kinesis in the city, the multiple facets of the public spirit, the empathies and psychopathies of a crowd. Producing panoramas, dioramas and daguerreotypes of city spaces, *Flâneurs'* gaze brings out the relationships which the dwellers share with their built environments. The *flâneur* observes not only how the nodes and the landmarks incorporate the urban dweller in architectural power politics but also reports life from the streets, edges and divides to aggregate the impact of all psycho-spatial operations on the urban subject (Lynch, 1960). Sharon Zukin (1995) draws attention to the fact that landscapes offer to the gaze the contours of power crafted at different epochs in history. The *flâneur* negotiates countless anachronies existing in the modern urban cityscape like past/present, imagination/reality, dream-like advertising/inferior actuality, control/defiance, purposive directionality/purposeless loitering, capitalist utilization of human resource/ rebellious refusal, welfare/deprivation and so on and so forth. In confronting the modern urban experience, the *flâneur* distinguishes himself from the *badaud* or the gawker and gaper to the *erlebnis* (awakened contiguities) of the *flâneur*.

It takes Sam Miller close to ten years to be able to walk in Delhi. Infrastructural developments, more fellow foreigners on the roads and the Eicher city map are some of the advancements which pave way for this miracle. Making some hesitant forays across Delhi, he decides to devise a geometric formula to traverse Delhi on foot. He is inspired both by Ian Sinclair's method of following a V on the map of London and also his own fondness for mathematics as a discipline. After many mental perambulations, he adopts a spiral for his route as it is both endless as well as controlled. He writes,

I had found both my device and my metaphor. A spiral through Delhi would give me a loose framework for my wanderings, always forcing me away gently from places I have already visited. Eventually, I would reach beyond the city. (Miller, 2008, p. 12)

Miller has an enormously vast variety of experiences at pedestrian level. He stumbles upon ancient palaces and swanky new metro stations. He cuts across express highways and inner ring road and walks along other arterial as well as peripheral pathways in the city. In Old Delhi,

he has a nightmarish experience in an open-air slaughterhouse. Excreta becomes a recurring refrain. In Paharganj, he encounters Delhi diarrhoea, touts and shoe-shines. In the proximity of the upmarket Jangpura, Miller discovers a slum for Bangladeshi immigrants located in an open sewer. The city's once thriving waterway, the Yamuna River, is now a smelly, muddy and weedy drain which at Nigambodh Ghat, becomes an open-air crematorium. He finds fresh air unexpectedly in the deserted stretch of open countryside streaking the city: the Ridge, or northernmost tip of the Aravalli mountain range. While the landmarks or events he stumbles upon are incidental both to his spiral route as well Delhi's kaleidoscopic heterogeneity, he emerges rich with stories and perspectives he hardly expected to find. In a newspaper interview to Shailaja Bajpayi, Miller says,

I have gone to insalubrious places and wondered what stories I would get out of them. ... My expectations were challenged. When we go there, we should not think the poorest of the poor are hopeless. Often they have more interesting things to tell. (Miller, February 21, 2009)

The method in his random peregrinations is provided through reflective commentary on social and urban phenomenon- diverse concerns like economy, religion, practices, development, migration, dislocation, minority rights, education, resources, history along with heritage, politics, administration, commercialisation and globalization all are seamlessly woven together to address Miller's chief concern and interest in the future of this megacity. Following the rulebook of the contemporary expatriate writer, this flâneur has his feet on the ground but his finger on the pulse of the postmodern city as he feels the throbbing hybridity produced in cities by forces of capitalism and globalisation. Explains Miller

... I walk the streets in a route which I describe in the book, trying to explore what has happened to this extraordinary city and the most important thing is that, in many ways, it had become a world city. (Miller, January 28, 2009)

The quintessential quality which makes Delhi eligible for this sobriquet is that it has changed its nature from a parochial city to a plural city. As he says: "You have so many worlds in a small area in Delhi" (Miller, February 21, 2009). Simmering beneath the surface of this world city are unresolved tensions. It is these imperfections which make the city interesting for Miller and he interprets his mass of experience in the light of the push and pull of macro vs. micro, organised vs. unorganised sectors, spatial segregation vs. inclusive town planning, public transport vs. traffic congestion, unity vs. communality and modernisation vs. inequity pervading the city. Miller's Delhi is not Dalrymple's Delhi. He does not engage with its past but with its present and future. Miller also begins with the feeling of "otherness" which makes

him quite abhor the city initially. Eventually, he gets involved in the seismic urban processes afoot in Delhi. He finds Delhi and himself in Delhi through methods different from Dalrymple's. His methods are more journalistic, engaging with the here and the now, and the vigour and versatility of a *flâneur* suits both his own nature as well as the perceived nature of the city. His method is antithetical to the method of travel writing as he recounts his experiences as "an itinerant and an observer", without fetishizing, romanticizing or exoticizing the place (Girija Sankar, February 25, 2011). It is akin to an expatriate writer who embodies the spirit of the *flâneur* to accept and leverage his otherness to the extent that he beats the city to its own game by bringing out and making the city face its own 'other'. Though Miller embarks on his peripatetic odyssey to manage his own "otherness" in Delhi, yet his admiration of the *flâneur* and vocation of the journalist enable him to bring out the "other" of the city of Delhi itself.

The above inquiry suggests that Delhi is an important world capital on criss-crossing loci of rapid and incessant global flux. It has dazed and enticed the global jet-setters in equal measures. Though the volume of Delhi based expatriate writing is miniscule as compared to reams coming out of America and Europe, yet the genre is steadily and consistently evolving. Bringing on expatriate's gaze to the city, their act of reading and writing the city is implicated in the sense of "otherness" reserved for foreigners in the inbuilt hierarchical binaries of societies as notions of self, belonging, and identity are constructed antithetically to it. The expatriate's gaze is the Lacanian gaze where the gazed object does not remain mute or inanimate but speaks back to the gazer in a reciprocal relationship. As the expatriate feels objectified and marooned in an alien city, she also gazes back at the city as a resistive tool to manage her objectified otherness. Expatriates' participation in the culture of a city is mediated, therefore, through their sense of "otherness" and the need to conquer it. It is to quell this overwhelming feel of otherness that visitors like Dalrymple explore, understand and write a city like Delhi, a task made all the more imperative by the dizzying changes taking place in the economic, social, moral and cultural character of Delhi of the '90s. William Dalrymple's expatriate gaze in *City of Djinn*s goes beyond the sensuous as the one year he spend sin Delhi allows him all the leisure, opportunity and immediacy of engaging with the *umwelt* in Delhi. Thus, engaging with riddles of Delhi, discovering enabling narratives and penetrating to the depths of signs and symbol hidden in its mythology, history and geography, constitute his self-defining quest in the city. This quest as outsider and Britisher maps a unique territory of struggle of the settler's demons (djinn)s with the unsettling dimensions of the city. Sam Miller maps this territory on foot in the true blue manner of a "*flâneur* entering the multiplicity and complexity of Delhi through the gateway of his extended, empathetic, disassociated but

discerning self to observe and document the city. His ambulatory cartography aggregates the impact of all operations of power on the urban subject by locating it less in the centre and more at the margins. Flânerie equips the rambling expatriate self to adapt to the rambling city. Miller's Delhi cannot be equated with Dalrymple's Delhi as their thematic and semantic principles are different. Similarly, Miller's Delhi is not Dave Rager's or Rana Dasguta or Raza Rumi's Delhi- some more expatriates who have in the last few years produced highly self-mediatised accounts of the city. It is a rewarding experience to watch the developments in the genre of expatriate writing emanating from a city as no city exists in isolation today and can be studied most profitably in the perspective of its global interlocutions. As has been the attempt to trace above, the expatriate writing catalyzed by Delhi is rich with voices, strategies, issues and images that are resonant and iridescent with meaning for not only expatriates and trans-nationals but every resident, settler, writer and thinker associated with Delhi.

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