

TribhuvanUniversity

The Imperial Walk: An Orientalist Reading of Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers: A*

Walk in the Himalaya

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, T.U.

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

AmbikaRai

Roll No.: 6001

T.U. Regd. No.: 6-2-0772-0088-2012

Central Department of English

Kritipur, Kathmandu

March 2021

Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled "The Imperial Walk: An Orientalist Reading of Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Ambika Rai has been approved by the undersigned member of the Research Committee:

Members of the Research Committee:

Mr. Raj Kumar Baral

Internal Examiner

Dr. Sharad Chandra Thakur

External Examiner

Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota

Head

Central Department of English

Date: _____

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all those who provided me the possibility to complete this research work. I duly acknowledge and a special gratitude I give to my respected supervisor, Mr. Raj Kumar Baral, whose contribution in stimulating suggestions and encouragement, helped me to coordinate my thesis. I am especially indebted to his insightful comments, encouragement and generous contribution. His guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis.

I must express my very profound gratitude to the crucial role and I gratefully acknowledge with much appreciation the support provided by the Head of the Department of English, Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, my external examiner Dr. Sharad Chandra Thakur and my delighted Lectures, Prof. Dr. Anirudra Thapa, Pradip Raj Giri, Laxman Bhatta, Hem Lal Pandey and other lectures as they contributed enormously to my understanding of the difficult subjects.

Last but not least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family and friends. Special thanks goes to my dear friend Deekshya Thapa who deserve all my gratitude and love for her support. This dissertation would not have been possible without their warm love, continued patience, and endless support.

March 2021

Ambika Rai

The Imperial Walk: An Orientalist Reading of Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*

Abstract

This research paper analyzes Jamaica Kincaid's Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya a travel narrative, which specially focuses on imperial politics and Orientalist representation of Nepalese people, culture and society. This paper draws the insights from Edward Said's Orientalism which constructs a division between "the Orient" and "the Occident" and east is always portrayed as barbaric, irrational, strange, uncivilized, emotional, opposite to west which is civilized, familiar, masculine, dynamic, rational and sensible. Even though Kincaid is best known as an anti-imperialist, the approach she represents Nepali landscape, people, and culture propound that her travel to Nepal is linked with the rhetoric of imperial politics and provide an imperial view while embracing surveillance, exclusion, humiliation, and binary rhetoric. Overall this analysis tries to present how an African author from two former colonized states give a picture of other non-colonized state and the people of that state.

Key Words: imperialism, orientalism, representation, surveillance, exotic

In Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, the author intends to take us deep into the mountains of Nepal. The author, who is also an enthusiast gardener, joins a group of botanists on a quest in the Himalayas to collect seeds of Himalayan plants to bring back home to her Vermont garden. Seed collection itself is considered as one of the form of colonialism. The seed pursuit here implies an imperialist form of travel to claim the landscape of Nepal. This book describes the author's travel experience while overcoming fears and embracing the unfamiliarity. Kincaid has explained how she required more effort to do everything during this

travel including the basic aspects like eating, sleeping and bathing. The author's apathetic behaviour towards the local and her disinterest connecting with the locals, has been presented in the book itself as she kept on forgetting their names and even used materialistic names to address them which seem inhuman at times. The book also presents how the author lacked empathy for the people she had to get support from during her trip. However, she has also appreciated the beauty of the night sky, pilgrim destinations such as a sacred lake in TopkeGola, the flora, rhododendrons and the trees. In an introspective style, Kincaid intertwines the tormenting Maoist encounters with exciting botanical discoveries, with a herd of yak, fascinating encounters with other fellow travelers or a cloud of butterflies and breath taking nature.

The book also exhibits the overwhelming feeling experienced by the author while dealing with the treacherous paths, leeches, Maoist encounters, uneven surfaces and relentless climbing which affected her state of mind with displeasure and discontent. The bathroom situation, Maoist encounters, the fear of floods and landslides and the leeches became a major source of misery during her travel to the perilous high altitudes. The book also displays Kincaid's eagerness and optimistic outlook towards to her search for a rare specimen. The book, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* uses plain yet lyrical language to record the quotidian details of life in the wilderness.

Antigua-American writer, novelist, essayist, gardener and gardening writer, Jamaica Kincaid has been known to the world as a fiction writer, travel writer, gardener, post-colonial scholar, and professor of African and African American Studies in Harvard. Her literary works are usually based in her close scrutiny and in-depth understanding of various issues related to colonialism, imperialism, gender,

sexuality, gardening, racism and post colonialism world. In most of her work, Kincaid largely critiques the imperialist, absurdity, colonial mentality, exploitation, suppression, discrimination and naming practices of white European middle-class people regarding non-European. Starting from Kincaid's first book, *At the Bottom of the River*, which was published in 1983, was a mix of lyricism and anger. Moreover, in her other literary works such as in *A Small Place*, Kincaid openly criticizes colonialism and racism and the pain and impact on the colonized while also condemning the corrupt government of Antigua. Therefore, Kincaid's native Antigua is central in her works. Her another works *Lucy* which shows strained relationship between mother and daughter and her journey from Antigua to North America for the quest of her independence and her eagerness to create her own identity against her mother's. The dynamics of mother-daughter relationship takes a prominent place and appeared frequently in Kincaid's other novels such as *Annie John* and *The Autobiography of My Mother* and most of her works emphasis on her diasporic subjectivity and her post-colonial, anti-Imperialism standpoint.

A similar postcolonial standpoint has also been presented in Kincaid's 1997 essay, "In History," which mostly focuses in Christopher Columbus, an explorer who is known for the discovery of America in the European history, portraying him as an imperialist who, in the name of civilization and 'the white man's burden,' impoverished the indigenous people of America. Kincaid writes at the very beginning of her essay: "He, Christopher Columbus, discover this New World. That it is new only to him, that it had a substantial existence, physical and spiritual, before he became aware of it, does not occur to him" (1). According to Kincaid's postcolonial perspective, discovery of America by Christopher Columbus was not a discovery for those indigenous people who had been living there for ages, but was a beginning of a

new colonization. Kincaid's literary works are influenced by her status of uprooted subject, born in the Caribbean island of Antigua, but living in North America and she critically examines her dissatisfaction towards both Antiguan past with its colonial legacy, and her American present which is clearly portrayed in her literary pieces. This colonial setting strongly relates to her mother-daughter subject matter as well, which has been illustrated in her other writings such as *Annie* and *Lucy* which presented an intense connection between their Anglophile mothers and the colonial English. Her background also encourages her to write about deep, emotional, and, interesting topics while depicting beliefs on people and individual freedom and the change she wants in the post-colonial era. Kincaid's interest in gardening culture's colonial basis has been a defining quality of her creative writing throughout her career. Her first novel, *Annie John*, for example, uses references to indigenous and foreign plants and trees (guava, *Psidium guajava*, and bread-fruit, *Artocarpus altilis*, respectively) as a way of indirectly highlighting the impact of slavery and colonial practices on Antigua's cultural and economy. Born in colonial Antigua in 1949, Kincaid moved to America in 1966, where she began her career as a staffwriter for *The New Yorker*. Most of Kincaid's works are about the history of colonialism and botanical exploration, her own growing interest in gardening culture.

The book *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, describes Kincaid's journey to eastern part of Nepal which portrays her perspective on the representation of Nepali natural richness, people and culture in the present travel narrative while not sticking to her postcolonial standpoint adopted in her other literary works. Notwithstanding her postcolonial standpoint adopted in her earlier works, Kincaid alters her stance on the representation of Nepali landscapes, people and culture in this travel description. A thorough analysis and examination of the writing

addresses numerous questions on Kincaid's work such as, is her travel writing neutral or is still a disguise form of imperialist ideology. It also provides a clear picture of how African American view Nepal while also explaining if Kincaid's journey to Nepal is oriented towards going hunting for seeds or based under the surface of a travel writer projects European white imperialist desire on Nepalese people, culture and landscape notwithstanding a native of the island of Antigua. Though Kincaid is best known for anti-imperialist, the way she represents Nepalese people, landscape and culture in her book shows some twisted in her standpoint. In general, trying not to sound or reflect as imperialist, she gazes landscape and people of Nepal with imperial lens: domination, humiliation, contradiction, comparison and surveillance while emphasizing on her fatigue, dependency on the local people, the threat of the Maoists, and her fear of leeches and also her sense that she lacks an adequate memory and expressions to portray the by and large the whole experience. The way she depicts Nepali culture, society, people and landscape in her travel narrative can be analyzed through the spectacle of Orientalism which creates binary opposition between the West and East where East is always portrayed in contrast with the West and comparing each other.

Edward Said a professor of literature at Columbia University, a public intellectual, and a founder of the academic field of post-colonial studies wrote *Orientalism* in order to underline the narratives created by Western which seems dominating and fabricated representation regarding Eastern people, culture throughout history. Orientalism as a practice, according to Said, is a fabricated discourse or narrative or built system which creates binary opposition between the East and West where East is always portrayed as barbaric, uncivilized, exotic, irrational, timeless, and emotional as opposite to west which is civilized, dynamic, rational, masculine,

familiar. As Said says, "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"(2). The Orient was created politically, ideologically, scientifically, imaginatively, militarily as opposite to the Occident by the fundamental structure of power, knowledge hidden in the text and discourse. The Orient is always portrayed as with the contrasting image of the Occident and a clear demarcation line is drawn between the West and the East. In *Among Flower: A Walk in the Himalaya*, Kincaid's representation of Nepalese people, landscape and culture can be analyzed through the lens of Orientalism and the rhetoric of imperial politics.

For further deep analysis on this topic this research paper partly draws the ideas of postcolonial scholars and rhetoricians like Mary Louis Prat, David Spurr and it also brings some reference from critical stylistician, new historian such as Theo van Leeuwen, Lesley Jeffries, Michel Foucault. As Kincaid's claimed that her travel to Nepal is purely focused on seed hunting expedition to the Himalayas of Nepal as she writes, "my love of the things that are far away, but things I have no desire to possess" (24) but while deeply foregrounding her writing clearly shows different view which is contrasting with her claim. Unlike Kincaid's other literary works *Among Flower* draws very few reviews and interpretation and available few research also focuses on the perspective of Kincaid's herself rather than the representation of Nepali people and landscape here which is one of the driving force to do this research as being Nepali, how we are presented in the travelogue, writings of Western scholar and how do we feel about it. Do they present the realities as they encounter or do they fabricated our representation?

In 2001 the well-known author Jamaica Kincaid embarked on an expedition, with collector Daniel Hinkley and a collector-couple, Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones,

to the Himalayan regions of Nepal to collect seeds for her garden back in Vermont. The expedition was funded by the National Geographic and the travel narration was later published as the author's travelogue, *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*. The author attempts to account for the tension between conceptions of the foreign and the domestic that inform the desirability of collecting exotic seeds, and to consider what metaphorical implications this tension might have for reading Kincaid's own diasporic subject position in her travel narrative about plant-hunting in Nepal.

The author has invoked the genre of colonial travel writing and plant-hunting practices in this book as Kincaid sets out to gather the seeds of as many "gardenworthy" plants as she can find during her trip to Nepal. The term gardenworthy is used by Kincaid to refer to the kind of plants that can be easily cultivated in the cooler temperatures associated with gardens in her home in America while also illustrating Kincaid's attitude toward Nepalese people which can be described as colonial attitudes towards botanical history. As seed hunting is taken as one of the crucial part of Colonialism, her desire to collect exotic plants from around the globe and grow back in her garden in Vermont and her longing for the Garden of Eden clearly possesses the attitude of Colonialism and imperial mentality. These extracts from her travel narrative proves my previous statement as she writes,

As I walked up and down the terrain in the foothills of the Himalaya looking for plants appropriate for growing in the garden I am now (even now, for the garden is ongoing, and a stop to it means death) making in Vermont, the strangeness of my situation was not lost to me. Vermont, all by itself should be Eden and gardenworthy enough. (189)

Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya elucidates Kincaid's journey to eastern parts of Nepalese Himalayas in the company of her botanist friends and Nepali Sherpas who

made her journey a success although seed hunting mission was frustrating and challenging. Kincaid's travelogue about plant collecting in the Himalayas of Nepal, projects her colonial attitudes towards Nepalese landscapes. Even though *Among Flowers* revolves around the subject matter which may only appeal to other gardening enthusiasts, the language of gardening reflects the colonial rhetoric that distances and has attracted various reviews as well as criticisms.

Kincaid has used many of the strategies of colonial writing, including the estrangement engendered by the geographic otherness of the landscape. Critics such as Ashmita Khasnabish, for example, talk about "mutual empathy" in Kincaid's travelogue (97), arguing that Kincaid "not only embraces nature, but embraces human beings as well" in order to forge a "humanitarian identity" (98). Khasnabish also claims that Kincaid's "appreciation of a foreign culture and religion is admirable and points towards her globalized and universal identity" (101). Similarly, Paul Giles asserts that *Among Flowers* builds solidarities between Kincaid and the Nepalese people, particularly through nature and their plant hunting objective. On the other hand, Kincaid's ambivalent nature is further explored by Jill Didurin "Gardenworthy': Rerouting colonial botany in Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*." sees Kincaid as rejecting a false solidarity with her helpers. Kincaid also demonstrates an 'equivalency between her own experience of colonialism and the experience of subaltern Nepalese in the twentieth century'. Since her travel was funded by the National Geographic, Kincaid has also discreetly tried to provide her view towards the associations of the organization with colonialism and ethnographic profiling of races.

The author's exploration of her emotional relationships with her garden back home presents her deep observations how gardens have had a close relation with the

history of colonization and how the plant gathering and seed collection have been regarded as Western exercises of imperialist appropriation. Zoran Pecic, in his essay "Floral Diaspora in Jamaica Kincaid's Travel Writing" writes,

Floral Diaspora in Jamaica Kincaid's Travel Writing (2011)vi, discusses 'gardens' as having significant functions in the history of colonization and how Kincaid's text *Among Flowers* is 'both an act of resistance and a means for appropriating the Western institution of botany to voice untold stories of exploitation'. (Pecic, 2011, p. 139)

Pecic explores how the discourses, with 'gardening' as their central trope, can have multiple functions as discourses of power and dominion. Placing the idea in a post-colonial context, he uses Kincaid's travelogue as an example to illustrate how, during the travel, her post-colonial identity negotiates with her current position of belonging to the imperialist camp.

The portrayal of the author as a critique of and complicity with colonial attitudes toward botanical history has been widely discussed in her plant hunting trip in this book. This travel narration was funded and published by the National Geographic Society, an organization with a long history of domesticating 'exotic' places and people for American benefits. The author has also emphasized her implication in American society and cultural anxieties when she explains that the Nepal trip was delayed for a year because of "The Events of September 11" (5). She writes, "I felt all ready to go and then there came that new State of Existence into being called "The Events of September 11". How grateful I finally am to the uniquely American capability for reducing many things to an abbreviation, for in writing these words, *The Events of September 11* "(5). The ironic reference to "The Events of September 11," as well as Kincaid's funding and publishing arrangement with

National Geographic, displays her disconcerting relationship to the history of European and American exploration and the history of colonialism.

Among Flower: A Walk in the Himalaya deals with Kincaid's journey to eastern parts of Nepal with her team and also the Nepali Sherpas who made her journey a success. The choice of certain linguist terms such as to represent own views to the world is always determined by one's ideologies, beliefs and values. According to Lesley Jeffries, "... choices in naming has more obvious ideological potential. That is the choice of a word with pejorative or ameliorative connotations. In other words, where a choice of word not only makes reference to something, but also shows the speaker's opinion of that referent" (*Critical Stylistics* 20). Jamaica Kincaid in her book gives different names to the Sherpas, an ethnic group from mountaineering region of Nepal though they already had their names. She writes:

I then met my other traveling companions, the people who would make my journey through Himalayas a pleasure. There was Cook; his real name was so difficult to pronounce, I could not do it then and I cannot do it now. There was his assistant, but we called him "Table," and I remember him now as "Table" "because he carried the table and the four chairs on which we sat for breakfast and dinner. Lunch we ate out of our laps. There was another man who assisted in the kitchen department and I could not remember his name either, but we all came to call him "I Love You", because on the second day we were all together as a group, he overheard me saying to my son, Harold, after a long conversation on the satellite telephone, "I love you" and when he saw me afterward, he said in a mocking way, "I love you," and we all, Sue, Bleddyn, Dan and I laughed hard at this. (26)

Here, denial to pronounce real name shows how writer objectify Nepalese individual which is humiliation at the other hand. This represents Kincaid's colonial attitudes projected towards Nepalese as one of the main tendency of Colonialism is naming or nomination. It provides a clear picture of how an Afro-Caribbean and an African writer from two former British colonies depict other non-white and, therefore, diverges from the numerous studies done on white Europeans traveling in the non-European world or of the colonized encountering other colonized people in diasporic spaces as the British never physically colonized Nepal as they did to other Asian countries such as India and Burma. A black woman from the Anglophone Caribbean but based in the United States, Jamaica Kincaid depicts Nepal and the Nepalese people with appropriate complexity as the author's indifferent behavior towards the local and her disinterest connecting with the locals, has been presented in the book itself as she kept on forgetting their names and even used materialistic names to address them which seem inhuman at times. One of the scholars, Pallavi Rastogi in a post-colonial perspective wrote in her article "The Leeches Are the Least of the Worries": Blankscapes and Another Other in Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers* and Biyi Bandele's *The King's Rifle*" argues that "Kincaid's attitude toward Nepalese people is steeped in a distancing, hierarchical, semi-colonial rhetoric even as she seeks connections across cultural and economic barriers" (23) which can be seen in the following paragraph, This also shows how Kincaid uses a measure of Western-associated comfort to define Nepalese people.

Kincaid's travel narrative has been analyzed through the lens of Orientalism. Edward Said's book named *Orientalism* written in 1978, discussed about the deeply rooted or established discourse about eastern people, culture and landscape and their representation in the Western institution. Said says that, "The orient is an idea that has

a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, vocabulary that have given it reality presence in and for the west. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other"(5). Western people have already certain pre-concept or ideas about eastern people in their history, tradition which helps them to assume things about eastern people. The use of nouns to refer to Nepali Sherpas exactly the ones who supported Kincaid's whole journey to the eastern Himalayas of Nepal which shows Kincaid's attitude toward Nepalese people. The nicknames used such as "Cook," "Table" and "I Love You" actually reduce the Nepalese individuals to objects and materials. According to van Leeuwen, "Instrumentalization is a form of objectification in which social actors are represented by means of reference to the instrument with which they carry out the action in which they are represented as being engaged" (46). Kincaid's linguistic names and denial of real human names suggest a rhetorical means by which people are discriminated against in a racist manner. Terminologies such as "Table," "Cook" and "I Love You" display a racist idea as they connotatively express insulting meanings. Comparing people with objects is dominating and insulting which vividly show Kincaid's attitudes towards Nepalese people.

Further exploration of Kincaid's attitude towards Nepal shows in her travel narrative is that she views Nepal with Orientalist's eyes. Orientalism constructs binary divisions between the West and the East. One of the binary divisions constructed between the West and the Orient pertains to the notion of time and argues that the East is always portrayed as opposed to the West. Said affirms that the Orient is considered to be timeless as opposed to the West, and Orient, since the earliest time, has remained the same: exotic, strange, uncivilized, feminine, timeless, barbaric and emotional as opposed to the West that is familiar, civilized, masculine, dynamic,

rational and sensible. He further profess, that West has brought huge progressive changes and improvements and East remained same, unchanged. The following paragraph is the evidence for Kincaid's Orientalist attitudes towards Nepali people and landscapes:

I did truly feel as if I was in the unreal, the magical, extraordinary. People seemed as if they had no purpose to being themselves, as if the only reason to be there was just to be there. The tiny streets came to an end abruptly, going immediately from the confusion of authentic and imposter to the solidly real, and the real was always poor and deprived and self-contained. Just outside the window of my hotel was an area enclosed by concrete, of perhaps forty feet by forty feet. It had pipes, with water constantly pouring out of them—it was a communal place for doing things that required water. People were bathing, washing their clothes, or filling up utensils with water. (18)

The above paragraph extracted from Kincaid's travel narrative displays Kincaid's Orientalist attitude toward Nepal and Nepali people. "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient- dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (3). " The expressions used by the author such as "the unreal, the magical, [and] extraordinary" show the Orient's peculiar nature in contrast to the West that is rational, rich, adventurous and ambitious. By making statement, describing them she tries to claim over Nepalese people and tries to have authority, superiority over them. In the latter part of the colonial history of western Europe during the nineteenth century, this genre was developed as part of the discourse of colonialism, working to articulate the legitimacy of Western

territorial accumulation by means of erotic and dangerous travel. Such accounts describe the landscape, traditions and practices of local peoples in the authoritative discourse of imperialism, in which the relationship between the colonizer and colonized was naturalized by spatial as well as racial differences. The Nepalese are represented in binary terms in the extract such as purposeless, poor, deprived and self-contained. The detail that she provided in the above paragraph shows the pathetic situation of Nepalese people which is different from the West. Kincaid clearly describes Nepal and writes from a diasporic, postcolonial subject position, her texts not only offer complicated ideas of nationalism tied to colonialism, post-colonialism, and migration, but they also continue to reinstate herself in new places and spaces as her life and her concept of the self-change. Her narrated self is, therefore, written in relation to a previously narrated self. As Said's argue in his book that 'the Orient' is always portrayed as different as 'the Occident' as present in the above mention paragraph.

She even made reference to her blood; she clearly builds a division between America and Nepal. At one point she says, "... When we realized our shoes were crawling with leeches that were eagerly burrowing into our thick hiking socks, trying to get some of our very expensive first-world blood" (73). Her perspective towards people has been presented in her work itself in an interesting manner. Terms like "First-world blood" which shows her discriminatory attitudes even in biological fact things like blood. Here, she even tries to show superiority in natural things which cannot be changed. Another term "our thick hiking socks"(73) also shows the luxuriousness of American people and with a kind of surprises she tells that despite that thickness of her socks, leeches manage to suck their "expensive first-world blood" (73). Here, she even tries to challenge the natural things and tries to establish her

identity out of it. One interesting thing about her is the construction of people. Americans are idealized whereas Nepalese are downsized and she puts Europeans between Americans and Nepalese. According to her, "Thamel, one of the tourist attractions in Kathmandu, is filled with shops and restaurants and native European people, who look poor, and bedraggled. But this is a look of luxury really, for these people are travelers, at any minute they can get up and go home" (17). Her view towards Europeans as "poor and bedraggled" on the one hand and having a "look of luxury" on the other hand is interesting as well as perplexing because it suggests their inferiority to the Americans and superiority to Nepali simultaneously. She even sees other than American inferior, uncivilized, unscientific etc. which clearly shows her discriminatory attitudes towards other people.

Kincaid also presents her indifferent nature towards Austrian people and totally dislike German. As she writes, "As Americans and British people we not only made fun of the Germans, we also hated them" (182). She also writes,

One group was from Austria but we decided to call them the Germans, because we didn't like them from the look of them, they were so professional-looking with all kinds of hiking gear, all meant to make the act of hiking easier, I think. But we didn't like them, and Germans seem to be the one group of people left that cannot be liked just because you feel like it. (27)

Here, she shows her discomfort and dislikes for the German people and clearly shows her racist attitude towards them. Edward Said says that, "The relationship between Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (5). Here, Kincaid's attitudes clearly shows, the power relationship, domination between the West and the East as Said claims in his book *Orientalism*. Not just only with the Nepalese people but even with the Western people

as herself being from West she compares and presents power relationship, complex hegemony which is quite intriguing. Deliberately she called Austrian people German which is clearly a dominating and insulting attitude. She presents her feeling of hatred towards German people which is totally inhumane. She even doubts the capabilities of Austrian people and looks down to them by saying "all meant to make the act of hiking easier"(72). She mocks other appearance and tries to show own superiority which shows that no one can accomplished all the hardship and trouble during their hike but only by themselves. She really undermines other capabilities and doubts them without any reasons. Like Said argues that Orientalism always create binary division she tries to compare others with herself and tries to prove herself as superior to other which shows her Orientalist attitudes towards not only Nepali people but to the people who belongs to Western community as well.

Though the main purpose of this travel is seed hunting she rhetorically defined and described Nepal with imperial politics and Orientalist gaze. She depicts Nepal and Nepalese people with appropriate complexity. The underlying value of Orientalism is Orient is always portrayed as degenerate or degraded which means that Orient are cowardice, lust, violence, careless and disregardful. According to David Spurr, the rhetoric of debasement focus on " the active production of images inspired by the fear and loathing that lie at the heart of classificatory systems presented as the products of rational thoughts" (77). Debasement is related with crimes, possible danger, suffering that might occur to the tourist which also shows the Western domination of other countries. Kincaid in her travel narrative shows dreadful, fearful images of Nepal where plane crash, accident is just a common thing. While she writes in a letter to her friend, "By the way: Have you heard of the plane crashing and the bus going off the road in the floods, all in Nepal? This happened yesterday. My love

to you and Bob. (6). These might just be a little concern about her travelling but the way she writes “all in Nepal” shows the vulnerability of Nepal to deal with natural disaster and prone to accident and also readers might feel the fear and danger. It also shows humiliation towards Nepal and shows vulnerable picture of Nepal to other readers. Here, she tries to present Nepal as poor, developing, vulnerable nation which is quite opposite to the West. This shows negative image of Nepal to other people who haven't been here and also creates fear to those who want to visit in near future. Similarly, she also present Nepal as war-prone nation while she writes, "We passed by an army outpost, and that was frightening, for everything associated with the government was a potential target of the Maoist" (179) clearly projects threat and danger which might be discouraging for other travelers to travel Nepal. It also creates bad images of Nepal in global scenario. Right after landing in Kathmandu, she writes:

We flew to Kathmandu in the dark of night. I childishly asked if it was safe to do so, wondering if we might accidentally crash into a mountain. We landed safely and I gave a man forty American dollars for carrying my suitcase from the baggage area to the taxi. Everyone was astonished by this amount of money, but I was so grateful to be myself, whatever that was, in one place that I would have paid many times that more just to say, “Hi, I am me.” I went to bed and slept soundly through the night in a memorable hotel called NorbuLinka, memorable because it is the only place I have slept in Kathmandu. (11)

Here, she doubts about her safety and wellbeing while landing in Kathmandu childishly. She is grateful to be herself and proud of her personal identity and trying to established her own identity in new place and she is happy to pay more money for

that. She presents herself as a wealthy or rich person enough to give extra money to the taxi driver more than it cost. Here she compares her happiness with money as she says I could have paid more money just to say hi it's me like everything can be borrowed by money which tries to show her imperial attitude of being superior, dominating others. Here imperialism does not mean directly ruling or conquering territory but her inner attitude towards Nepalese people is to dominate and being oneself superior. The comment made by Kincaid itself is childish as Kincaid infantilizes the transportation moving her throughout Nepal both by relating and comparing it with her children's toys and with romanticized, antiquated views of futurism and furthermore infantilizes the technological efforts and abilities of the Nepalese in comparison to her own existence in a different, 'shiny' future. By emphasizing the differences between USA's transportation facilities readily available, well functioned to her and those available in Nepal, Kincaid comments on both movement and belonging. Despite the self-awareness demonstrated through the word *childishly* by Kincaid, as well as the recognition of a post-modern fragmentation and putting together of identity, Kincaid expects to lose herself in the strangeness of Nepal, which is why she is so grateful to actually remain the same.

Moreover, Kincaid's comparison also reveals the contrast, suspicious, furious, indifferent, unfamiliar people from east and familiar, trustworthy and caring people from west. Her construction of nature, particularly the bank of the river as polluted by humans and animals is described as:

We walked down a bank littered with feces, human and animal, to the river and washed ourselves, knowing full well that it brought with it whatever the people above us had deposited it. But we were desperate to renew ourselves and water

always offers the illusion of that renewal. And so we walked through the stench and tried to clean ourselves. We were not clean and we felt it. (172)

The aforementioned quote reminds one of David Spurr who argues that in colonial discourse, “social problems in health and sanitation, unemployment, or population growth come to be associated with individual filth, indolence, and sexual promiscuity”. (76) The author here clearly mentions that the river has been polluted but she does not state who has littered it. While she mentions that humans in addition to animals are responsible for the defilement of the river, she does not say whether the tourists (majority from the west) are involved in polluting the river. However, this context can be related to the statement provided by Kincaid as “I proceeded to pee” and “while squatting and peeing”. (75) This is more than enough to prove that travelers and tourists from West themselves are responsible for littering and polluting the places they travel. The parallels between the two scenes of bathing and swimming in polluted waters also support the argument made by various scholars that Kincaid exists on both sides of the native-tourist binary opposition. As in her book *A Small Place* she positions herself as the native in Antigua who chastises tourists for not knowing about the lack of a hygienic sanitation system, but adopts the tourist position whilst bathing and polluting the waters of Nepal.

Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* says that, "The orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture. Orientalism express and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial style (2). Western institution, ideology, doctrine already create a discourse about eastern people which is barbaric, timeless, uncivilized, exotic,

whereas, west is represent as civilized, dynamic, scientific, rational etc. While leaving from Kathmandu airport to Tumlingtar she says,

We boarded an airplane that made my anxiety dominate all the other feelings. It resembled something my children would play with in the bathtub, rounded and dollishly smoothed, like an old-fashioned view of the way things will look in the old-fashioned future, not pointed and harshly shiny like the future I am used to living in now.(22)

Here, she compares airplane with her children toys which is totally humiliating and also implies her superiority. This shows how down she looks at Nepal and her insulting remarks. Moreover, Kincaid has made comparisons between her existing lifestyle and Nepal's aviation infrastructure and belittle the latter comparing it to toys children would play back home. The comparison Kincaid has made in the book displays her mentality which is stuck in disparaging the Nepalese lifestyle in general.

Furthermore, her downsizing perspective has also been reflected through blurring the boundaries between animals and the Nepalese people. Analyzing the quiver of disgust she feels at the prospect of seeing a fruit bat, Kincaid asks, "What is alone bat scurrying in a small restaurant in a crowded city next to a small village situated in the foothills of the Himalaya full of Maoist guerillas with guns?" (19). The same underrating behaviour has been reflected as the author expands the bat into the restaurant, which expands into the foothills of the Himalayas, which teem with Maoist guerillas with guns. In addition, Kincaid emphasizes that the Maoist guerillas end up being as hostile and repulsive as the fruit bat themselves. The Maoists and the leeches both trouble Kincaid's calmness. Besides that, she also added,

All day as we had marched along, taking a new route to escape the Maoists and their demands, which we felt might include our very lives; we felt endangered, assaulted, scared. In reality it was just about a dozen leeches but how to explain to a leech that we did not like President Powell? How to tell a Maoist that Powell isn't even President? At some point I stopped making a distinction between the Maoists and the leeches, at some point they became indistinguishable to me, but this was only to me. (90)

Here, Maoists are represented as animals, and considered incapable of any sort of rational thought. However, the author herself questions her perspective and criticizing her behaviour towards the Maoist as she realizes she is the only one among her companions who thinks like this. This portrays the author's view towards the Nepalese people as imperial if not colonialist in and of itself.

It has been observed that Kincaid frequently brings up the memories of her home. Eating the vegetable Christophene, for example, that was not found in Antigua but in Dominica from where her mother hails, Kincaid recalls that she hated eating it as a child but in Nepal, "it was the most delicious thing I ever tasted" (43). She also says,

I could still remember the feeling of living in a village in the mountain of Vermont. I could remember that when I spoke, everybody I knew, everybody I was talking to understood me quite well. I could remember the school building in my village, a nice, very big red brick building that was properly ventilated and properly heated and had all sort of necessities and comfort, and yet I had found much fault with it and refused to send my children to school there. . . . I could remember my house with its convenient and fantastic plumbing and water to be had anytime I needed it, just by opening the tap in my fantastically

equipped kitchen. I could remember my doctor, a man named Henry Lodge, who I often believe exists solely to reassure to me that I am not about to drop dead from some imagined catastrophic illness. I could still remember my supermarket, The PriceChopper, overflowing with fruits and vegetables from Florida, California, or Chile, just so I could choose to buy or not buy, strawberries for instance, in summer, winter, any time I like. (24)

The above paragraph explains Kincaid's comparable perspective towards her home and Nepal and explains Vermont as rhetoric of sufficiency, familiarity, comfort, luxury, and affluence as opposed to the Orient (Nepal) that is often defined by lack, strangeness, discomfort, and poverty. She has described shops in Nepal as "filled with exactly the same amount of dirt and disorder or dirt and order" (172). She has even aspersed the Nepalese men while sharing her experience as "in the same little hats" is described as the source of suspicion, discomfort and uneasiness: some of them seemed pleased to see us (and that made us suspicious), some of them seemed angry at us (and that made us uneasy), some of them seemed indifferent to us (and that made us suspicious), in other words, we were not feeling comfortable being there (172). As per Edward Said, East is always portrayed as opposed to the West. Orient is considered to be timeless as opposed to the West, a place where scientific development and progress take place. While the Orient has not changed at all and is strange, degenerate, feminine, timeless, barbaric, and emotional as opposed to the West that is considered familiar, civilized, masculine, dynamic, rational, and sensible. According to Orientalism, Orient is rigid and has been trapped in timelessness while the West has brought about tremendous change and is progressive in nature.

While downsizing the Nepalese people and their lifestyle, Kincaid also expresses her happiness as she moves further away from the city and nearer to the isolation of the Himalayas:

At around one o'clock that morning I came out of the tent to pee and met a black sky full of stars. Everyone was asleep, everything was quiet, once again I was struck by how far away I was from all that was truly familiar to me, but I didn't long for anything; I felt quite lost and this feeling led to another feeling—happiness. (101–02)

Kincaid expresses happiness for the first time here which has been generated through distancing herself from the Nepalese people and their lifestyle and through alienation. However, it is the emptiness for it is just Kincaid and the “black sky” here that allow her to find contentment. The people of Nepal rarely made her feel that and did not bring her that happiness. The “home” that Kincaid builds for herself in this text indicates an all-embracing love that is generated through one's close relationship with nature. As she moves deeper into the heart of the mountains, Kincaid becomes more and more attached to the nature on which she can impose her own emotional consciousness which implies that nature fosters the humanistic encounters that people cannot generate which is also implied as Kincaid adds, “the happiness that comes with the privilege of looking at something solely rare and solely uncomplicated. But the Sacred Lake plunged me into thinking of the unknowable of other people” (151).

Kincaid's imperial attitude can be observed when she writes, “I was so happy to see them; and this suspicious thought crossed my mind, that I was so happy to see them because to see them is to claim them. Claiming, after all, was the overriding aim of my journey” (71). These clearly prove her imperial gaze on the Nepalese landscape. As historian Bridges says that, “... being increasingly identified with the

interest and preoccupation of those in European societies who wished to bring the non-European world into the position where it could be influenced, exploited or, in some cases, directly controlled” (430). Western people not only tries to influenced, explored but even they try to control or claim over it. It might be a curious thing to readers that is there no any positive description or aspects of Nepal presented in her book? She writes, “That afternoon also we saw some white-haired monkeys way above us in trees, and they made the most wonderful sounds to each other” (71). Here the way she presented Nepalese landscape is overwhelmed with the aesthetic power. She aestheticizes the Nepalese landscape. In *Imperial Eyes* by Mary Louise Pratt writes, aestheticization, one of the constituents of the imperial trope, “monarch-of-all-I-survey” refers to the pleasure travel writers or imperialists receive from the vision of the discovery. Pratt notes, “within the text’s own terms the esthetic pleasure of the sights singlehandedly constitutes the value and significance of the journey” (200).

The way Kincaid defines, describes, and represents Nepali people, landscapes, cultures, and other aspects in her travel narrative *Among Flowers*, it demonstrates her Orientalist perspective which is creating a binary opposition between east and west, domination, nomination, debasement and others. Her travel to Nepal is threaded with the rhetoric of imperial politics and colonial attitudes. Notwithstanding her postcolonial standpoint where she openly criticizes colonial mentality in her other literary works like *A Small Place*, but *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya* alters her earlier positions. Though at some point, readers can be confused as she complicates the issues by defending herself against it by saying, “I have never been so uncomfortable, so out of my own skin in my entire life, and yet not once did I wish to leave, not once did I regret being there” (27). In a one way, she tries to stay ‘neutral’

not to sound like a 'White-European' or like a tourist but most of the time, she criticizes Nepali people, complains and compares things back to her home. Her writing draws a binary opposition between West 'Vermont' and East 'Nepal' which is one of the underlying principle values of orientalism. Therefore, she views at the travelled places and people with an imperial eye, colonial mentality and Orientalist perspective.

Kincaid's denial of real human names and objectifying them by giving materialistic name clearly portrays her racist, inhuman nature towards Nepalese people and the way she compares Nepali circumstances, landscape, infrastructure, everything with her home town Vermont shows her orientalist attitudes and imperial mentality towards Nepal. As most of her earlier literary works represents her as a postcolonial writer but a close examination of this book alters her earlier positions as seen on the representation of Nepali landscapes, people and culture in present travel narrative. This change in her position can be observed because of her diasporic subjectivity and change in her location which is from her native land Antiqua to America, Harvard. This analysis depicts Kincaid's trek to Nepal as represented in *Among Flower: A Walk in the Himalaya*, is like Christopher Columbus' travel to America, which contains with the rhetoric of naming, surveillance, imperial politics and Orientalist attitude.

Works Cited

- Bridges, Roy. "Exploration and Travel Outside Europe". *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. Edited by Hulme, Petter and Yungs. Cambridge University Press. 2002.
- CHANSKY, RICIA ANNE. "BETWEEN SELVES: AN INTERTEXTUAL APPROACH TO JAMAICA KINCAID'S 'AMONG FLOWERS.'" *Biography*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2015, pp. 135–151., www.jstor.org/stable/24570310. Accessed 28 Mar. 2021.
- Didur, Jill. "'Gardenworthy': Rerouting Colonial Botany In Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*." *Public*, no. 41, 2013, pp. 173-185
- Edwards, Justin D., and Rune Graulund. "Introduction: Reading Postcolonial Travel Writing." *Postcolonial Travel Writing*, edited by Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 1-16.
- Giles, Paul. "Narratives of Traversal: Jamaica Kincaid and the Erasure of the Postcolonial Subject." *Recharting the Black Atlantic: Modern Cultures, Local Communities, Global Connections*. Ed. Annalisa Oboe and Anna Scacchi. Routledge, 2008. 365–78. Print.
- Johnson, Richard, et al. *The Practise of Cultural Studies*. Sage, 2004
- Kincaid, Jamaica. "In History." *Callaloo*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2001, pp. 620–626. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3300540. Accessed 24 Mar. 2021.

- Kincaid, Jamaica. *Among Flower: A Walk in the Himalaya*. National Geographic Society, 2005.
- Kress, Gunther R., and Theo Van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. Psychology Press, 1996.
- Pecic, Zoran. "Floral Diaspora in Jamaica Kincaid's Travel Writing." *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 138-55.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eye: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge, 2007.
- Rastogi, Pallavi. "'The Leeches Are the Least of the Worries': Blankscapes and Another Other in Jamaica Kincaid's *Among Flowers* and BiyiBande's *The King's Rifle*." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2015, pp. 19–36. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/reseafritelite.46.1.19. Accessed 10 Mar. 2021.
- Said, Edward. W. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979.
- Spivak, GayatriChakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Die Philosophin*, vol. 14 no.27, 2003, pp.42-58.
- Spurr, David. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. Duke University Press, 1993.