

Socio-Cultural Representations through Lived Religions in Dalrymple's Nine Lives

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Abstract : In the continuous interaction between the past and the present that historiography is, each time when history gets re/written, a new representation emerges. This new representation is a reflection of the earlier archives and their interpretations, fragmented remembrances of the past, as well as the reactions to the present. Memory, or lack thereof, and stereotyping generally play a major role in this representation. William Dalrymple's *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* (2009) is one such written account that sets out to narrate the representations of religion and culture of India and contemporary reactions to it. Dalrymple's nine saints belong to different castes, sects, religions, and regions. By dealing with their religions and expressions of those religions, and through the lived mysticism of these nine individuals, the book engages with some important issues like class, caste and gender in the contexts provided by historical as well as present India. The paper studies the development of religion and accompanied feeling of religiosity in modern as well as historical contexts through a study of these elements in the book. Since, the language used in creation of texts and the literary texts thus produced create a new reality that questions the stereotypes of the past, and in turn often end up creating new stereotypes or stereotypical representations at times, the paper seeks to actively engage with the text in order to identify and study such stereotypes, along with their changing representations. Through a detailed examination of the book, the paper seeks to unravel whether some socio-cultural stereotypes existed earlier, and whether there is development of new stereotypes from Dalrymple's point of view as an outsider writing on issues that are deeply rooted in the cultural milieu of the country. For this analysis, the paper takes help from the psycho-literary theories of stereotyping and representation.

Keywords : stereotyping, representation, William Dalrymple, religion

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