

# Exploring an Explorer in Afghanistan: A Perspective on Dervla Murphy's 'Full Tilt'

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“The appearance of woman in the field of literature is a significant fact. The advent of female literature promises woman's view of life, woman's experience; in other words new elements”

- George Henry Lewes

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social responsibility of literature has occupied the center stage in the contemporary litterateur's minds. Travel writing is also a great source, often the only source to take a look at prevalent societies. Works of art often try to seek the truth about the past, unravel the psyche behind the concrete happenings of history which projects the present. It presents a truthful picture of life in reality. Dervla Murphy honestly gives an account of her incredible journey, travelling from Ireland to India via bicycle Roz. This travelogue relies on her letters and diary entries structuring them into a narrative form. She goes on a crazy trip from Europe to India on a bicycle, meets all sorts of people and a few jerks, lives on clover for days and nearly she faces life threaten hardships, including heat stroke, starvation, weather related calamities, deals with nasty insects ,bad sanitation and wild animals and human beaurocracies, climbs up and down mountains and drags her bike along, sometimes on her back when the roads get bad, falls in and out of love with cultures and people who admire her and keeps most upbeat attitude and sense of humor throughout her journey. Her journey glosses over the European journey and focuses on her time in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the early 60's. Despite many dire warnings about travelling in Muslim countries in those days she went on and embraced their culture and hospitality. The idea of a woman travelling alone is outside the experience and beyond the imagination of everyone in Afghanistan. It is a sense of self discovery and social realization that in Afghan she was stopped not to continue her bicycle riding as it was very strange for the Afghan that the idea of a women travelling alone is completely outside the experience and beyond the imagination of everyone that it is universally assumed by men in Afghan.

This paper focuses on new perspective of post colonial approach and will try to interpret the dark riddling encounter

which is the first hand experience of Dervla Murphy who struggles a lot in male dominating society in Afghanistan. Dervla Murphy's charm and sensitivity as a writer and as a traveler reveals not only the vitality of an age civilization nor about the colonialism but the problems and challenges of women faced by women in Afghanistan. Her stay in Afghanistan astonishes her that the liberated women have not found their identity even after a long time after independence. This travel writing recalls the historical behavior and the identity which is lost by women in Afghanistan and Dervla Murphy tries to fight for their lost identity of Afghan women is transmitted in this book. This journey glosses over the European journey and focuses on her time in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is a sense of self discovery and social realization that in Afghan she was stopped not to continue her bicycle riding as it was very strange for the Afghan that a women travelling alone is completely outside the experience and beyond the imagination of everyone that it is universally assumed by men in Afghanistan.

Ancient values vibrating with renewed meaning today is awe inspiring and the enigma behind her travel knowing about people personally, staying with them, mounting intolerant and skeptical tendencies is explored in this paper. The Post-colonial discourse seeks to “Reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant,” the acknowledgement of women's experience, the focus on the indifference towards gender issues and the quest for identity become significant aspects of post-colonial thought and fiction. Feminism and post-colonialism share a common concern for voicing the position of subaltern in society and engendering feminist consciousness in reaction to male paradigms of female experience. It is true that though women have been official storytellers to generations, much of world literature had been dominated by a canon that dismissed women's writings as inconsequential few centuries ago. They are treated as “colonise” in a male dominated value system. Their work has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience because they were presumed to write within the enclosed domestic space and women's perceptions of their experience within it and therefore, rank below the works of male writers who deals with weightier themes. Contemporary women writers through their fiction have chosen to talk back,”

“Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of empty words that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of talking back, is no mere gesture of empty words that is the expression of a movement from object to subject- the liberated voice.”(P-xii)

Religious In a Muslim country Dervla also finds a phenomenon that intrigues her is the number of catholic olegraphs in all eating houses and tea houses. Christ. But all these Christian Picture baffled her and granted Muslims are also devoted to Christ as a prophet, but she had not have thought their devotion so far.

Dervla Murphy experiences the psychological conflicts inherent to cultural assimilation to live between the old and the new dominant hegemony of the invasive social and cultural institutions of the colonial imperialism of the mother country. She even understands that the Afghanistan has been inspired a steady stream of English language accounts by anthropologists, travel writers, military personnel and journalist. Islam is so rigid around Afghan that no man, except father, husband and sons, is allowed to glimpse a woman’s face. Dervla was not happy seeing millions of men think only about countless hours spent silently sitting with a hukka but not thinking about any productive work to the society or to their country, but gives a real picture of ‘savages’ of Afghanistan. She strongly feels that it is all a question of seeing one of the oldest and richest civilizations in the world long past its zenith.

She writes about an incident in Persia a proprietor told her that no women are allowed outside the women’s Quarter. She was sent to a tiny room which was given to women with six beds and just a small space to walk between them, all women possessed a minimum of two infants and all being busy and changed at the time of her appearance. The windows and the doors were tightly sealed and the stink was appalling which made Dervla to comment on their condition and felt sorry for them. She compares the life of Irish women and the monotonous life led by these women but she is helpless. Dervla was warned by her friends that it is dangerous to be a woman and a Christian in a Muslim country and see experiences and explores Afghan culture.

Dervla is surprised to meet the chief who had five wives, fourteen sons and uncounted daughters, thirty eight grandchildren and sundry cousins all live in various apartments around a courtyard through which flows a swift stream with weeping willows and birches lining its banks. The influence of English was more and several sons were speaking in English or in German, getting into the conversation she explores that Afghan women don’t talk to their husbands and also know nothing about the business of her husband. A total 35 members of the family plus twenty two servants live in the compound.

She also narrates an incident wherein two private broke rank soldiers seized her arms and hustled her about a hundred yard up the street to a military police barracks. They enquired her and confiscated her camera and were locked for fifty minutes in a cell which has been used as a lavatory by all its former occupants and never cleaned out. But then an officer appeared in a frenzied flurry of profuse apologies and said it was all mistake and after he saw the passport they understood that she was harmless.

The more she sees life in these undeveloped countries and the methods adopted to improve them the more depressed she becomes. She strongly expresses that a country like Afghanistan should be as an excuse for America and Russia to have a tug of war for possession. The Afghans repudiate their native culture yet cannot succeed in adopting an alien civilization which they imagine is superior, though they do not understand the importance of their culture and tradition. They want to impose communism as a way of life but with a minimum of damage to the traditional foundations of the country concerned, where the westerners have told that they want foundations right away and start a new hygienic society. ,

Dervla meets another host family Mohammad Musa, who knows English converses and reveals few important matters that a married lady who was against early marriage, who and tends to rebel against wearing the veil. Mohammad’s mother is a tremendous character one of those old people who make the young realizes that the old age is not something to be dreaded, when it gives mellowness and contentment to a human being. Although she does not speak English, the warmth of her welcome has made the author to feel truly ‘one of the family’ and successful in inspiring them.

Living in the west it has become impossible for most of us to envisage our own past by a mere exercise of the imagination, so we are rather like adults who have forgotten the childhood that shaped them. And that increases the unnaturalness of our lives. So to realize this past through contact with a people like the Afghan should help us to cope better with our present, though it also brings the sadness of knowing what we are missing. At times during these days she feels at peace that made to think seriously to consider settling in Hindu Kush. Nothing is false, for humans and animals, and earth intimately interdependent partaker together in the rhythmic cycle of nature. B looking at the condition of women in the above areas she feels sympathy both towards the daughter who had acquire a taste for what is considered basic human rights, and towards the father who knows the value of Islamic tradition and the danger of exchanging them for the western culture.

## II. CONCLUSION

Finally we find Dervla Murphy explores the outer world in Afghanistan and also self realization of the inner and outer approach. The narrator inscribes the experience of travel with a sense of meaning on looking not only through the global concerns but the interest of women entangled in the name of culture and tradition.

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