
ENHANCED AND EXPENDED VIEW OF V.S. NAIPAUL ABOUT INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The place of India in the writing of V.S.Naipaul is both meaningful and relevant, despite the fact that he is many generation away from Indian Society, and was born and brought up in West Indies and educated at London, However he began his journey to India in February 1962-the land from which his father's father had been brought to Trinidad as a baby and from which his maternal grandfather had come as an indenture labourer. Naipaul grew up surrounded by mementos of India for "in its artifacts India existed whole in Trinidad." This kept India alive in his mind. In *An Area of Darkness* he says, "The India...which was the background to my childhood was an area of the imagination" (41). "His journey to India was undertaken as an exploration of this area of imagination"-the "area of darkness." The result was shattering as "it was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two" (265). Landscapes of the mind –whether ancestral "area of darkness." Or literary and intellectual dreams –utopias-usually consternate and disenchant when confronted in stark reality. Describing his disillusionment with England in his travel to it from India nurturing hopes of finding his true home at last R.Parthasarathy makes a coincidental remark: "A part of me finally died in England. Should I have the journey at all? It had broken my life in two."¹

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Naipaul came to India with great expectations. To him India was everything that Trinidad was not and it had a rich past and an ancient civilization. India is taken to be the mother land-the mother culture by most Trinidad Indians, as the link with India gave them a sense of pride and saved them from self-contempt. Indeed, Naipaul should have expected from India a certain largeness-not only geographical but a liberating largeness of the intellect, of culture and achievement. From the colonial pettiness and parochialism of Trinidad he came seeking metropolitan largeness in India and he found “in India as in tiny Trinidad” the feeling “that the metropolis is elsewhere, in Europe or America.” In spite of its being occasioned by a journey An Area of Darkness is not a travel book. It was written neither during the travels nor from the diary notes. Naipaul has said it was a very difficult book for him to write. He found the experience of India too personal, too private to be turned into fiction- an attempt to do so had to be abandoned.² In this regard Derek Walcott mentions what Naipaul has observed as:

It was about ten to twelve weeks after I got back that I began to try to write something. And then it was like playing with the beginning of a novel.....³ The experience of a journey becomes the means of an exploration of self and the book An Area of Darkness is classified as “autobiography.” Critics like William Walsh and D.J Enright have remarked on the extremely personal nature of the book. For example, Walsh writes: Naipaul’s return to India is as much a research into himself as into another country .He is crawling in sensitive naked feet up through the tunnels of his own self.⁴ Similarly, D.J Enright suggests as: The book is not exactly about a journey, a country, but largely about himself, a hybrid production, part novel, with himself as hero, villain, victim and at times clown.⁵ Naipaul, with his usual self-knowledge, has himself confirmed the insight of the two critics. What he writes about India is more in the nature of a self-inquiry. He says in the foreword to India: A Wounded Civilization as: An inquiry about India-even an inquiry about the emergency has quickly to go beyond the political.. and though in india I am a stranger the starting point of this inquiry....more than might appear in these pages has been myself(9).

Again in an interview with Andrew Robinson Naipaul has said of An Area of Darkness as: “Yes, it’s about me really, being an Indian immigrant in Trinidad.”⁶

In his visit to India Naipaul has looked hard at the reality of India. What he saw anguished him, shocked him, disillusioned and enraged him. He was maddened by the smug talk of India’s ancient culture and spirituality in the face of India’s horrendous grinding poverty, the hideous

squalor of village and town, the abysmal depths of ignorance and superstition and the blind mimicry of the West. His reactions were violent and indignant. The reality of India was “cruel and overwhelming.” To ignore it, as Naipaul says in *An Area of Darkness*, “was to ignore too much of what could be seen, to shed too much of myself: my sense of history, and even the simplest ideas of human possibility.”(21)

The rigid straight –jacketed caste-grouping and the concept of “Karma” engendered in Indian society a distressing acceptance and meek acquiescence in blatant off social injustice. Caste consideration make Indians “incapable of contemplating man as man”, he feels. He says, “There was no idea of a contract between man and man” (45). *An Area of Darkness* is an honest book where Naipaul does not try to appear a larger man than he is and his reactions are frequently unreasonable and end in self-reproach. His self-wounding marks the entire sojourn in India. He found India frightening and exhausting. It is this characteristic honesty that gives the book its value-the value of a personal document with a multinational canvas, that stands reflected in the form of a plethora of experiences of the writer in different societies.

The self-searching, the sheer integrity of the book compels admiration. It is the frank, unsparing response of a sensitive and intelligent mind-not afraid of appearing prejudiced, Vehemently critical of India though it is, it is the work of man who cares. Naipaul’s 1962 visit taught him the painful lesson of his separateness from India. Eugenie Aranda remarks:

It was because of this experience that Naipaul took the full measure of a deracination all the more poignant, as ties still remained, holding on like the threads of a fabric that is rent.⁷

This experience had so deep an impact that Naipaul could not use it as material for his novel. But this experience had been clearly used in *A Flag on the Island*, *Mr. Stone and the Knight’s companion* and *The Mimic Men*. Regarding the deep trauma of the Indian experience Naipaul says: “For all that was not flesh was irrelevant to man, and all that was important was man’s own flesh, his weakness and corruptibility.”²⁸ Landeg white remarks that “the shadow of Naipaul experience of India”⁹ falls across the page of both *Mr. Stone and the Knight’s companion* and *A Flag on the Island*. In *An Area of Darkness* Naipaul remarks that it was Europe that revealed India’s past to India and made its veneration part of Indian nationalism (206). He views that centuries of alien rule had made the Indian civilization static and decaying.

Coming out in 1977 Naipaul’s second book on India, *India: A Wounded civilization* is the work of a writer whose mind is made up and who is only out to prove a point. This book of only 175

pages speaks of the Indian civilization as a “wounded civilisation”- decayed and drying. This book is a selective documentation of this fact. At the end of the book Naipaul goes back to the 1967 article quoting: “The crisis of India is not political: this is only the view from Delhi. Dictatorship or rules by the army will change nothing. Nor is the crisis only economic. These are only aspects of the large crisis, which is that of a decaying civilization where the only hope lies in further swift decay” (174-75). One can prove almost anything about any country in the world with the kind of selective documentation, as Naipaul uses-referring to fiction, newspaper excerpts and the opinions of individuals. In a country of more than 600 million people, the opinions and conduct of a few cannot be taken as representative. In *An Area of Darkness* Naipaul tell us of his withdrawal from the Hindu rituals of his family: “The images didn’t interest me; I never sought to learn their significance” (32). Similar was the attitude to the other Indian religion- Islam: “The doctrine, or what I thought was its doctrine, didn’t attract me. It didn’t seem worth inquiring into; and over the years, in spite of travel, I had added little to the knowledge gathered in my Trinidad childhood.”¹⁰ Indeed, Naipaul specific observations are astoundingly penetrating. He has caught perfectly the self-absorption of the average Indian; the narrow chauvinistic loyalties bound by consideration of caste, clan or linguistic group. There is truth also in Naipaul’s perception of India’s pathetic dependence on the West. He says in *India: Wounded civilization* as: But all the disciplines and skills that India now seeks to exercise are borrowed. Even the ideas Indians have of the achievement of their civilization are essentially the ideas given to them by European scholars in the nineteenth century (129). Naipaul’s own work shows that most of the confusion and contradiction that he finds so exasperating in Indian society are general characteristics of x-colonial societies trying to find themselves. The West Indian mimicry of the Indian mimicry is the inevitable consequence of historical events. The Black Power movements in the West Indies, the spreading Islamic fundamentalism and the anti-English agitations of India are all the fumbling and faltering attempts of displaced and dispossessed peoples to find or recover their identity. The dependence, the parasitism that he found in the West Indies, in India, in Argentina as well as the Muslim countries he has visited recently, is not the evidence of the particular intellectual paucity of the peoples of these societies-it is the crippling legacy of colonial rule. Dependence- political, economical, intellectual and psychological and self-contempt are invariably the typical traits of colonial societies, and all these have gone in to the making of this multinational canvas of Naipaul both rich and dense,

albeit Naipaul's contempt of the third world societies is unwarranted. When Naipaul goes to India he finds that all the disciplines and skill that India now seeks to exercise are borrowed (India: A Wounded Civilization, 129) and it is a forced, imposed, degrading contact. India did not seek contact with the West. This is tainted, corrupted and created dependence. Surely, we must think that such a civilization (i.e. Western civilization) came to India like affliction, crippling mind and soul. Perhaps it is with the natural right of the insider that he speaks with such harshness, bordering savagery about the shortcoming of the society. He is too intelligent a writer not to know the real nature of colonialism. There is awareness that slavish imitation of dominating culture is a universal phenomenon, not exclusive to any one race, land or culture. It is true that any relationship of ruler and ruled, master and slaves would lead to such a situation as exists in the colonies. One of Naipaul's chosen epigraphs for the Trinidad section of the Middle Passage points to the very fact "it refers to this effect on Britons of Roman Rule."¹¹

The Western civilization so dear to Naipaul has been nurtured on the blood, sweat and tears of those whom it enslaved and subjected. Naipaul dwells almost obsessively on the defects of those so deliberately and diabolically deprived-their lands dishonoured, their language, culture and religion corrupted or degraded and they themselves taught self-contempt and abject adulation of the dominating culture. And it must be remembered that this was done at the point of the gun, with whiplashes, by cunning and deceit and more insidiously by conversion to Christianity and by a system of education that enslaved the mind. The poverty of India which increases the wrath, repulsion and appalled horror of Naipaul is entirely a creation of British rule. Jawaharlal Nehru observes in *The Discovery of India* that Bengal, once so rich and flourishing, after 187 years of British rule...is today, a miserable mass of poverty-stricken, starving, and dying people.¹²

Equally revealing is this statement: "A significant fact which stands out is that those parts of India which have been longest under British rule are the poorest today".¹³

India: A wounded Civilization extends little hope of recovery to the Indian Civilisation. This work demonstrates that rigidly held preconception can be as much of disadvantage in non-fiction as in fiction. It was written during the Emergency and in it Naipaul pronounced without hesitation the doom of democracy in India: "The dismantled institution –of law, press and parliament –cannot simply be put together again"(168). In an interview in 1977 he was asked:"why do you think there was a huge majority against Mrs. Gandhi in the last election?"

Doesn't that undermine, to some extent, your belief that Hinduism encourages this passive acceptance of intolerable condition? He gives a painfully disingenuous answer:

It would be very heartening if that were so. But I think that the election results do not have that simple explanation only. In 1971, Mrs. Gandhi split the Congress Party and took over, won the structure, the machine in my places. And what happened some months ago was that she simply lost the machine. I don't think it had to do, in many places with popular resentment. It had to do in many places, with popular resentment. It had to do with people walking away from her...¹⁴

In more recent statements, however, Naipaul has been disarmingly willing to acknowledge a positive view of India, willing to admit that his view is changing. Instead of an India that has nothing of its own he has been veering round to speak appreciatively of things distinctly Indian-our textile industry, our spices and even our music.

Naipaul's *Among the Believers*, seems to be an account of journey-to certain Muslim states and is subtitled *An Islamic Journey*. The judgment that the journey should have led to are already present here in the first chapter. Naipaul seems unable to go beyond his fixed and obsessive ideas, of the dependence of third world societies on the west –for ideas, education, technology, everything-emphasising their own culture and intellectual impoverishment. The dichotomies and the contradictions that he discerns with so much irony, in the Iranians in the U.S., are not a mark of hypocrisy but the natural result of conflict between inherited traditions, culture and religion and acquired way of life. Travelling to Iran with the opinion derived from the interpretation of the novel by an Iranian, he only sees everywhere evidences that corroborates this view. Thus the section on Iran concludes with the comment: "The civilization [western] couldn't be mastered. It was to be rejected; at the same time it was to be depended on" (80). In spite of its being a work of considerable length *Among the Believers*, has a title that goes beyond the initial observation about dependence made in chapter one, as far as general comment on the societies of these Islamic countries is concerned. In Pakistan too he finds the same phenomenon: the rejection of Western Civilisation was "for the community as a whole a way of ceasing to strive intellectually. It is to be parasitic; parasitism is one of the unacknowledged fruits of fundamentalism" (158).

The account of the journey itself is both informative and engrossing. The author's keen eye misses little whether it be the details of the landscape or the characteristics of the people, his exact prose makes each incident vivid and his quiet sense of humour lends a subtle flavour to it

all. In 1971 Naipaul had said: “As you grow older, you understand people a lot more; you have greater sympathy with people; you enter into them much more.”¹⁵

The book is rich in autobiographical asides. Early in the book he recalls the limited extent of his contact with the Indian Muslim community in Trinidad. The memory of his own deficient background is like a wound that will not heal. Like a nagging pain it can raise its head suddenly in Iran. In Pakistan, the mood of a travelling companion suddenly strikes a sympathetic chord in Naipaul: “He didn’t know how directly he was speaking to me. The idea of struggle and dedication and fulfilment, the idea of human quality, belongs only to certain societies. It didn’t belong to the colonial Trinidad I had grown up in” (83). However, Naipaul’s quest for his roots in Trinidad and in India had culminated in the realization that there could be no going back. He too could not pretend “to be what he had ceased to be.”

The older Naipaul has acquired a more tolerant and sympathetic vision without losing the clarity and keenness of thought that distinguished his earlier work. The award of Nobel Prize for literature of the year (2001) for his entire corpus including the latest work *Half A Life* is a fitting and worthy recognition of this international writer with a wide variegated canvas of multifunctional cultures and civilizations.

There is a powerful exploration and expression of multinational canvas in yet another book of Naipaul- *India: A Million Minutes Now*, which contrary to our expectations after *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilisation* surprises us by its empathy and changed attitudes towards the country. Naipaul’s early attitude and later transformation become more understandable when we examine the circumstances of his life which made him an outsider wherever he went. Landeg White in his book *V.S. Naipaul* writes:

His visit to the village of his grandfather arouses problems over language, fears about the food and water, demands for money, and concludes with Naipaul’s angry refusal to give a relative a lift into town. There is no home for him in India; his assumptions are too much of the West. Just as it was in London that he wrote the Trinidad novels, so it is in Kashmir that he writes *Mr. Stone and the Knight’s Companion*, projecting on to his English hero a strong Hindu sense of the world as illusion. Returning to Europe, he is no longer able to believe in the places in which he has lived and worked. A Brahmin-cum-Englishman in Trinidad, a European in India, an Indian in London.¹⁶

His inability to fit and adapt makes him see himself as a person utterly displaced, connected by birth and education with three different societies and yet unable to establish living contact with any of them. This recognition of himself as a displaced person propels him into an awareness of homelessness as a universal feature. Defending his earlier stance of hostility in an interview with Dilip Padgaonkar for the Times of India, Naipaul says that this hostility stems for his involvement. He says, "I do not have the tenderness more secure people can have towards bush people... I feel threatened by them. My attitude and the attitude of the people like me is quite different from the people who live outside the bush or who just go camping in the bush on weekends."¹⁷ From this statement we are to understand Naipaul's denouncement, criticism and attack to be a result of involvement and a desire to help. His return to India again and again, his minute and detailed study of the Indian landscape and its people speaks of an obsession and commitment, and as a result, his latest book on India becomes a celebration and a positive assessment of the confusion and cultural variety and pluralism represented by India. In his study of India, Naipaul reflects on a total experience, recognizing that even when he is most appalled he is considering a situation in which he is involved and which reflects aspects of himself. To use Landeg White's words, "The author is at war with his subject, and the irony diminishes and is ultimately self-destructive. The irony of *An Area of Darkness* is a kind of perspective. It allows for discovery, for a constant revelation of new dimensions. It returns constantly to that personal crisis which is at the heart of the experience recorded. It depends on the fact of distancing in place and time."¹⁸ One finds Naipaul imposing an order on his own experiences and the experiences of the Indians by describing specific encounters with a general commentary on the historical progression of a community, a caste or group. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is virtually an account of the Indian response to its own history. Sometimes the individuals retract with a sense of guilt, sometimes it is an attempt to atone and rectify and at times it is accompanied by a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. On the whole, all the characters interviewed and described display a development and a consciousness of their history, a willingness to adapt and change, an ability to analyse their own past critically. Naipaul's assessment of the situation he describes in this book is best reported in his own words:

There is a big historical development going on in India, wise men should understand it and ensure that it does not remain in the hands of fanatics. Rather they should use it for the intellectual transformation of India.¹⁹ He advocates a proper harnessing of the forces

of analysis and change that are sweeping the country and this cannot be anything else except the outcome of concern and involvement. Naipaul has projected through his characters a large vision of India, an India with a human association rather than a clannish, casteist India which will utilize all "the bravery and the skills of its people" towards building a better nation. The glory and shame of its past is a spent force. Possibilities only lie in a future built upon the lessons learnt from the past. In Naipaul's view it will have to be an India with a "larger view of human association" and he is sure that "out of this larger idea, and out of the humiliation of British rule, there will come to India the ideas of country and pride and historical self-analysis, things that seemed impossibly remote."²⁰ Naipaul candidly admits that his return to India after 27 years has been different from his visit in 1962. He had shed what he calls his "Indian nerves" and his overcome the darkness that separated him from his ancestral past. He writes, "I had carried in my bones that idea of abjectness and defeat and shame (his ancestors had left as indentured servants for the sugar estates of Guyana and Trinidad). It was the idea I had taken to India on that slow journey by train and ship in 1962; it was the source of my nerves."²¹ After the dark ages of intermittent invasions, vandalism and wars, the freedom movement which led to the independence of India symbolizes to Naipaul "the truest kind of liberation." It has awakened people to the knowledge of who they are and what they owe to themselves and this liberation of spirit has taken the form of rage and revolt. India is now a land of a million little mutinies-"supported by twenty kinds of group excess, sectarian excess, religious excess." Naipaul sees these excesses as the beginnings of self-awareness, the beginning of an intellectual life-an intellectual life which finds its focus in the idea of a nation. The mutinies become indispensable necessary stepping stones towards India's growth and its restoration. What Naipaul describes in this book is the direction from which the winds of change blow. If it was people at the top who worked towards the freedom of India, the liberating forces have worked their way down into the grass-roots level and change takes the shape of disturbance. Nevertheless it is a forerunner of real growth. A recognition of this truth results in this book being a celebration rather than a self-conscious, irritable account of an embarrassing experience.

Naipaul begins with a description of Bombay. The crowd he sees on the pavements and the road points to something unusual. Naipaul is informed by an acquaintance, a writer, that the

crowds could be Dalits celebrating Dr. Ambedkar's birthday. This homage paid to a great man becomes a moment of triumph and honour to the men and women who had joined the celebration-an awakening of intelligence, knowledge and honour. The awareness of their particularity and the courage to assert themselves are signs of confidence and change. The alienated sections of society forming themselves into groups and counter groups speak of an awareness of particularities and each group derives its strength from a different source. If the Harijans derived their inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar, Mr. Patel, the middle class Hindu, derives his confidence from the worship of the deity Ganesh, and Anwar derives his strength from his orthodox faith. Mr. Raote, the staunch ritualistic Hindu, draws upon his ambition, politics and religion to sustain himself. All these individuals stand as representatives of different groups but as Papu, one of the characters interviewed, remarks, the aggressive feelings shared by these individuals can be made creative. Naipaul's tour of Bombay brings him into contact with every cross-section of that city: Papu the stock broker, Mr. Patel the Shiv Sena 'area leader,' Anwar the young Muslim, the Hindu gangsters, the Dalit poet A Namdeo and his wife Mallika. They all think well of the groups to which they belong and yet are analytical. Papu with his vegetarianism, is self-consciously aware of the absence of the killer instinct in him. He lives with fear of the Mafia dons and prepares for change and revolution. Vegetarianism, the legacy of his religion, becomes an anchor of his identity and particularity. He realizes that this survival depends on his ability to adapt himself to the demands of a changing society. He accepts the computer-does as it is done in the developed countries and attributes his success to his adaptability and ability to take on these developments. His self-discipline stems from his vegetarianism. He makes his contributions for social welfare, yet he is apprehensive of the dark, individualistic forces shaping themselves all-around him. He predicts revolution and chaos unless some efficient harnessing of these forces is done. He advocates making a creative use of aggression by channelizing excessive energy. Anwar is acutely aware of the criminal elements in his society, the petty quarrels and aggression which result in murder. Each member of his society believes in his own religion and brotherhood. Anwar's analysis does not fill him with hope. He foresees no change. Naipaul's ramblings in the city bring him into contact with gangsters-criminal elements with an individual code of conduct and adherence to certain deep-rooted lore such as making offerings in a temple. Bombay is a city of many faiths, races and conflicts. The city with its squalor and opportunity produces a variety of effects on its citizens.

While some become acutely aware of their singularity and difference others like the pujari Naipaul had met shut out the outer world, look inward and maintain their serenity and poise. The writer from Bengal Subroto, with his optimism and unworldliness, prompts Naipaul to move from his description of particulars to a general comment of India itself-India as a mismatch between dreams and setting. It is a land of writers, religious men, social workers, reformers and well-wishers in search of a common cause capable of uplifting the whole nation and allowing them to exercise their noble sentiments of brotherhood and community. At the time of Naipaul's visit it still remains fragmented a land of a million mutinies, a mismatch of aspiration and setting. Naipaul's sojourn in other parts of India, whether it is South India, Bengal, Punjab or Kashmir, presents to him the same picture. Though there is a resistance to change and an adherence to a prescribed way of living it is gradually giving way to new ways of seeing and feeling. These winds of change bring hope for the better-men and women opening upto broader visions of community, like the South Indian Brahmin Ashok marrying into a different community or Nazir from Kashmir venturing to aspire beyond the valley because of his education and abilities as an accountant. These men demonstrate a step by step rising, a gradual growth.

The process at work in India and the direction in which it is moving is best illustrated by Amir. Amir's father was a Raja who was both political and religious. He had bequeathed "many languages, many cultures and many modes of thought and emotion to his son."²² The son with his Western education had developed religious doubts, but these doubts do not smother him. This cultural upbringing and historical apprehension of his experience unfold a "path in a dialectical manner"²³ in which religion and the concerns of the real world are simultaneously present. He moves back and forth between the world of spirit and the world of matter. He says, "I find solace in both ways of thinking. The historical way shows me that human destiny is above this-our sufferings, our little problems. This idea of human destiny shows me that we are really moving towards a better world, in spite of the trouble and conflagration. The religious way teaches me endurance, reconciliation with the divine plan of which this is a part, but with hope and belief in a better future."²⁴ According to him "religion could be used to bring about a great change of consciousness-about the world and the place of men in it-and also to bring men to action."²⁵

During the independence struggle a new India came into existence which was unlike any that existed before. Naipaul defines it as a "central will, a central intellect, a national idea."²⁶ He says that the Indian Union has given its people a second chance, calling them back from the excesses

with which, in another century, or in other circumstances, they might have had to live. Among the excesses Naipaul lists are the various kinds of religious fundamentalism, the racial politics of some states and the revolutionary zeal of certain regions.

Hope lies in the fact that these excesses are being realized as excesses and there is a general growth in the intellectual life of Indian citizens resulting in an appeal to "wholeness and humanism."²⁷ Thus the mutinies become a means of renaissance and restoration. The various discussions he has had with people and their opinions, though chaotic and confused are connected with several issues concerning the country. Naipaul's understanding of his own displacement makes possible a broadening of scope. Just as he moves from satire and contempt towards sympathy and understanding, so also India, with its sections of people whose "Identity is at odds with their society, who understand homelessness and the threat of disorder, who feel condemned permanently to provincialism, who are ready to sympathise with struggle and failure and triumph,"²⁸ moves in the direction of possibility and growth.

The democratic rule in India is not satisfactory. India is a leviathan India is such a large country that it is an uphill task to govern it smoothly and efficiently. There are many reasons for the unsatisfactory administration and unhealthy parliamentary procedures, contributing to the present predicament or total mis-shape. As Tagore believed the people of India were not mature enough to understand the significance of democracy as they were illiterate. They were full of ignorance. But it was Gandhiji who advocated complete and full democracy to the people of India whom he thought would learn gradually the real sense and value of democracy. Ronald Segal points out: Democracy in India is doubtless inadequate and inefficient. In how many countries of the world which practise democracy is it neither? Because so many of the voters are illiterate, ill-informed, and largely indifferent to the procedure by which laws are delivered down to them from the intimidating seats of authority in the state capitals and high New Delhi itself. Certainly, on the village level, the traditional pattern of power, with the upper castes lording it over the lower ones, still in the main prevails; elections for village councils may be duly held, but their results merely confirm the existing forms of control. On the state and national level, however, popular participation in political choice is undeniably significant, displaying meaningful swings and variations.

When the sitting prime ministers are not safe and secure in the country what to talk of the common citizen of India! In Bombay there had been a regional party based on provincial

grounds to serve narrow provincial interest. It was Shiv-Sena the army of Shiva taking its name from Shivaji, the 17th century warrior leader of the Maratha people. The newspapers criticised Sena calling it 'fascist', but the Sena had continued to grow. Naipaul rightly observes:

But, in independent India, Bombay had found itself in the state of Maharashtra; and in mid-1960 a Maharashtrian regional movement had started. This movement wanted Maharashtra to be for the Maharashtrian. In the beginning the movement's hostility had been aimed mainly at poor migrants from South India; but other people had felt threatened as well. The newspapers had been critical; they called the Sena 'fascist'. But the Sena had not ceased to grow. Two years before, it had won control of the Bombay Municipal Corporation.²⁹

In Bombay the Municipal Corporation building was in the Victorian Gothic style of British Bombay. The council chamber, meticulously and impeccably constructed, resembles a Christian cathedral. Naipaul narrates:

The council chamber was so perfect in its way, so confident that it had all been negated by the simple saffron of the Sena. It made me think of the Christian cathedral in Nicosia in Cyprus, taken over by the Muslims, cleansed of much of its furniture, and hung with Koranic banners. It made me think of the Maratha rulers on the throne of Tanjore in the far South.³⁰

Thus the Bombay Municipal Corporation speaks of the ancestors of the Shiv-Sena and expresses the pomp and pride of the Maratha people. Here, in the corporation chamber, in the saffron and crossed sword of Sena, were the emblems of war and conquest. This truth about Bombay was the truth of other states as well. Naipaul points out:

It made the independence struggle seem like an interim, independence had come to India like a kind of revolution; now there were many revolutions within that revolution. What was true of Bombay was true of other parts of India as well of the state of Andhra, of Tamil Nadu, Assam, the Punjab. All of particularities that had been frozen by foreign rule or by poverty or lack of opportunity or abjectness had begun to flow again.³¹

In precolonized India, before British people became the rulers, the country was ruled by kings or Nawabs. There were different states. They were the rulers. The traditions prevailing in those days were very modest. There was a state and there was ruler. The ruler was for the state but the state was not for the ruler. The ruler was ready to do anything required for the welfare of the

state and its people. The state, its machinery or property was not for the personal use of the ruler. The ruler was the custodian or the caretaker, a real trustee of the state. The people of the state were happy and carefree because the king cared for the well-being of his people. Now, in modern times, the condition is totally changed. Today the so called public servants misuse the state machinery and facilities for their personal gain. The facilities include car, cottage, all fully furnished with ultramodern electronic gadgets like telephone and television. Prakash had been a minister for six years and now his government was in trouble. He appeared Naipaul to be speaking against the privileges. Prakash narrates:

The power gives so much of comfort, perks and status, a bungalow, all fully furnished, all personal attendants and secretarial staff, a chauffeur driven car, you can fly around at the expenses of the government. But when you come out of power, if you have no means, you may have to go back to the semi-urban area from where you come. You may have one servant, but not the bunch of servants you had as a minister. Or the free telephone calls.³²

These words of Prakash speak volumes about the prolific benefits made available to the ministers of the present democratic government. The government it seems is not for the people but for the ministers and officers. They are not the public servants of the welfare state but the servants who are using the state property to feather their own nests. They live in such pomp and luxury which poor democratic country of Gandhi can't afford. Naipaul sadly observes: Prakash was a lawyer, who said, 'In the good old days too many servants, for the big landlords, the Zamindars, and the feudals, gave a status. Today the servants are there to make your life comfortable. If you are a minister, and you travel on an aeroplane. 'But as man without power'—and now, as a preacher painting a picture of purgatory, to balance the heaven of success, Prakash began to darken the details of Indian air travel— 'many a time you will not know where to buy a ticket, where to stand in a queue, how to get your baggage checked. In a Western society, which is so orderly, between a common man there won't be a big gap in the physical arrangement of life, arrangement of travel and stay.'³³ Even in the Western countries it is natural for a man in power to exhibit his power and self. It is all the more so in India because power means everything in India. When an American leaves the White House, it makes no difference as far as his life style is concerned, very often; it wouldn't be like that in India, unless you have a will to live in hardships, like the old gods of the Gandhian era. Our present politicians of the new, generation

don't possess that spiritual potentiality, and they feel the difference. After they have fallen, they try for a while to capitalize on their so-called contacts with the authorities. They undertake certain commissions for people who want things done. But those contacts fade away very soon. And the industrialist, who once cared to take you in his luxury car to his august imposing residence rich house in his pose area, now doesn't bother to look at you. Many ministers when they leave their office leave many bills unpaid and do not vacate their government quarters. In India, we are slowly losing the moral ethos of our grandfathers. We do not have the Westerner's idea of discipline and social justice. There is a chaos. Prakash points out: Because of Industrialization, and the green revolution in the rural areas, new classes of nouveau-riche persons are emerging, and these people are being exposed for the first time to university education, comfortable urban life, stylist living, and Western influenced materialistic comforts. During this transition period, we are slowly cutting from the moral ethos of our grandfathers, and at the same time we don't have the westerner's idea of discipline and social justice. At the moment the things are chaotic here.³⁴ For people of India, the person in power is far away from them. When he is not in power people feel homely with him. They like him better, they can talk to him freely and they feel embarrassed when he is in power. When Prakash is in ministerial pomp in his big garden, lawn, police people, attendants, it makes his voters ill at ease, they think him to be far away. The personal equation goes away or changes. But, again, when the person returns to his original identity, he does not like it. After six years of office, Prakash could notice a change in his children. Their formative years were spent in opulence and status and people showered so much concern and attention over them. They didn't wish to go back to their village. His people also like him more with normal natural identity rather than with ministerial pomp. They welcomed him more as their good old country lawyer, what he was before he came to power and became a minister. They would respect his authority only if he was surrounded by a group of officers. Naipaul notices Prakash saying: 'Our people, because of the long tradition of the rajas and maharajas and feudal lords, they always look with awe and fear on the seat of power. But there is a dichotomy. They like an accessible, simple, compassionate, benevolent man in the seat of power. But at the same time they have a mental picture of power—of pomp, pageantry, authority and aristocracy. These things don't go together many times.'³⁵

The identity of a lawyer and the identity of a minister make a world of difference. There was a communal disturbance at Bellary—with a police firing resulting in seven deaths, arson and

looting. Prakash having assumed the authority directed the District Inspector of police, the Deputy Commissioner of Bellary and other officers who controlled the disturbance in a day. Prakash observes the difference: 'As a lawyer, I had appeared before the Deputy Commissioner of Bellary in several cases, where I used to address him as "your honour." But, as a minister, there was a transformation, I started giving him commands. Within a day there was a change in me. And people wouldn't have liked it, and the situation wouldn't have been controlled, if I had just been a lawyer. It's very strange society we have created. Democracy has made it possible for people like us to have a different role.³⁶ In India the original objective of winning independence was not merely the acquisition of power but the real establishment of Swaraj—meaning self rule or Ramraj, Naipaul writes: But then Narayan turns this rediscovery into something more mysterious. 'Gandhiji always, said that *Swaraj* means *Ramraj*. *Swaraj* means self rule, self government, it was the word used in the British days for Indian Independence *Ramraj* is something else. It is Rama's rule, a fantasy of bliss. Rama is the hero of the *Ramayana* the sacred Hindu epic. This epic echoes events of 1000 B.C., was composed or set down (by a named poet) at about the same time as the *Aeneid*, but has always been a living poem, more than literature, possessed by all Hindus, however illiterate or depressed, from childhood. Rama incarnates all the Hindu Aryan virtues; he is at once a man and God; his rule—after exile and sorrow is the rule of God on earth.³⁷ In 1975, Jay Prakash Narayan's appeal is the same. 'Swaraj means Ramraj'. He said we had gone far beyond the 'working class' and the antifascist struggle, beyond political system and the contemplation of the past. Naipaul points out: To make democracy work, Jaya Prakash Narayan suggests undoing tyranny, it is only necessary for India to return truly to itself. The *Ramraj* that Gandhi offered is no longer simply Independence. India, without the British; it is people's government, the re-establishment of the ancient Indian village republic, a turning away from the secretariats of Delhi and the state capitals.³⁸ The history of India written by the westerners is either untrue or far from facts. This fact is beautifully illustrated by Naipaul: In April 1976, in London at an 'International Conference on Restoration of Democracy in India' the audience heard that Alexander, the great on his march into India (327 B.C.), had not defeated king Porus of the Punjab, Western histories had lied for two thousand years: Porus had defeated Alexander and compelled him to retreat. Half true about Alexander in India; but the topic, in the circumstances, was unexpected. Yet it was in character. In the programme booklet for the conference an Indian merchant in the Dutch

West Indies (secure in someone else's economy and political system- the creation of another civilization) had taken space to print this quotation from Swami Vivekananda—the Vedantist who at the turn of the century exported Hinduism to the United States. Our Punya Bhumi and its glorious Past. If there is any land on the earth that can lay claim to be blessed Punya Bhumi, to be the land to which souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards the land of introspection and to spirituality it is INDIA.³⁹

It may be argued that the Hindu epic the *Ramayana* is the central text of the Hindu Diaspora. It is only a slight exaggeration to state that of all the religious books the *Ramayana* has come closest to becoming the central text of overseas Hinduism. It was the text that the indentured labourers carried with them from Tulsidasa's *Ramcharitmansin* Hindi, carried by the people in the North and *Kamba-Ramayaanin* Tamil was carried by people from the South. *Ramleela* and other folk performances presenting the text also formed the folk-lore for these people for many reasons. The most important reason for its popularity was its theme of exile, suffering, struggle and eventual return. The theme of exile is quite common in the original myths of many Kshatriya Indian tribes. In the epic the *Mahabharata*, the Pandavas are exiled for twelve years, while Rama goes into accepted exile for fourteen years in the *Ramayana*. In the Buddhist literature also the exile appears symbolizing the branching off of junior members from the mainstream ancestry through migration and the search for new lands and the place of exile becomes the new *Janpada* with its own city. Exile in the *Ramayana*, however, is not compulsory and is also time bound. Rama's return to his kingdom establishes *Ramraj*, the kingdom of lord Rama—the rule of righteousness and prosperity, a heavenly kingdom on earth.

We can safely argue that Naipaul in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* has come a long way from the Naipaul of *An Area of Darkness*. Firstly, because he has admitted the other narrator in the narrative, as Kala speaks for herself; secondly, because his comment for the social situation is valid and accurate; thirdly, because he contemplates and reflects on the problem from the point of view of the 'other' and then comments. It can be argued that *India: A Million Mutinies Now* has recovered the generosity that he had lost since he wrote *A House for Mr. Biswas*. It may be observed that Naipaul's most narrators in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* are urban, urbane, middle aged, middle class males.

It is a good sign that Naipaul has returned from the Naipaul of *An Area of Darkness*. Now we may proceed to observe and analyse changes Naipaul has pointed out in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. Naipaul sees people acquiring individuality. He sees changes in Raote as the Sena had grown; he had risen in the Sena. People had become richer and prosperous. Naipaul notes: My vision of Bombay began to change: the 'poor', the people down there, were acquiring individuality and had begun to stake their own claim to the city; (piety or rage at their condition, or disgust) was no longer sufficient response.⁴⁰

The income of the people had indeed risen substantially. There was a remarkable total change in the status. Raote found himself running 22 Sena areas in central Bombay, he became close to the top leaders; he was put in charge of the Sena's election organization. He began to be known and his name began to get into the newspapers. Naipaul finds that the India of 1962 has undergone substantial changes and he observes those changes delightfully. Naipaul also sees the qualitative change that has taken shape in the life style of the people of modern India. New luxurious buildings have been constructed which display luxurious gables and marbles. There was success visible to the eyes of Naipaul "success, but the lake was crowded. All India was crowded." Naipaul points out the change in the mosque:

An amplified quavering, nerve stretching voice of a mullah in the mosque on the boulevard—new to me, that mosque a plain small building, many houses deep, on the boulevard below Shankaracharya Hill. The very plainness of the mosque seemed to speak of the urgent need of the new lake crowd.⁴¹

Thus, we see that Naipaul's opinion is changed because his way of thinking, his outlook and approach has changed. He thinks from the Indian point of view. People like Mr. Butt have advanced in terms of money and status. Mr. Butt had been a contractor. His hotel had developed substantially. Now, in India there are million mutinies. Side by side there are various types of excesses. It seems these are the beginnings of self-awareness. These are the beginnings of an intellectual life. There exists now in India a national idea of central will and intellect. Naipaul is very positive here. He sees Indian union stronger, but Naipaul also finds the destructive chauvinism of the Shiv Sena and others. However, this change visible to Naipaul has taken place because of his change in outlook and attitude, as Naipaul writes:

A million mutinies supported by twenty kinds of group excess, sectarian excess, religious excess, regional excess; the beginnings of self-awareness, it would seem, the beginnings

of an intellectual life, already negated by old anarchy and disorder. But there was in India now what didn't exist 200 years before; a central will, a greater than the sum of its parts; co-existing with the destructive chauvinism of the Shiv Sena, the tyranny of many kinds of religious fundamentalism, corruption and racial politics of the south, the pious Marxist idleness and nullity of Bengal.⁴²

Thus Naipaul seems very much on the side of India. His response is totally positive. He talks in support and favour of India and its mutinies. The mutinies were helping to define the strength and vitality of the general intellectual life. Mutinies were part of the beginning of a new way, for many millions a part of India's restoration. Naipaul confirms:

Excess was now felt to be excess in India. What the mutinies were also helping to define was the strength of the general intellectual life, and the wholeness and humanism of the values to which all Indians now felt they could appeal. And the minutes were not to be wished away. They were part of new way for any millions, part of India's growth, and part of its restoration.⁴³

So, while attempting to analyse modern India, in terms of the ordeal of democracy in India, we also notice the changes that Naipaul has witnessed- the present scenario of Indian democracy, bedevilled by wide spread corruption in the administrative machinery. The fast erosion of moral values and lack of governance, and utter chaos are the characteristic features of the present democratic system of government that needs drastic reform. But Naipaul does not end on a note of despair or despondency, even the present, through apparently bleak contains promising potentialities for future. "If winter comes, can spring be far behind" (P.B.Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind") The present day turmoil and tribulation indicates vitality and strength of the general intellectual life and is taken as a harbinger of a still better India wedded to the lofty ideals of "Wholeness and humanism", "to which all Indians now felt they could appeal" Naipaul's treatment of India ends on a note of robust optimism and faith in her eventual "growth" and "vestoration". Thus Naipaul's exploration of India from an area of darkness (1962) to "A million Mutinies Now (1990) has undergone welcome and significant change and perspective and perception-from detached disdain to empathic involvement catholic understanding and melloured appreciation and optimism for a bright future.

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