

Chapter -IV

Naipaul's Interrogation and Interpretation of India in

India: A Wounded Civilization

IV.1 Introduction

Naipaul's second book on India *India: A Wounded Civilization* cannot be properly appreciated until we read it from the perspective of his earlier book *An Area of Darkness* (1964). In this book Naipaul's thesis of India was the land that mimicked the colonial masters. He criticizes Indians for their ridiculous imitation of costumes and their use of imperfectly understood language i. e. English. Here Naipaul analyzes the English influence on India as uncreative and retrogressive. In this first impression of the India, Naipaul appears to take a rather perfunctory view of English influence on India. He does not appear to take into account the socio-cultural influence of the West, the cultural hybridization it brought about. He characterizes India under the British regime as manifestation of the sense of defeat that engulfed the post-colonial India.

In his next book, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, he tries to explore real India behind the façade of the mimicry. Here he thinks post-independent India to be a land of far older defeat than its conquest by British.

Here he makes an oblique reference to the thousand years of India's subjugation prior to the British rule. But, what Naipaul says is not entirely true. India prior to the British Raj was divided into several states and kingdoms. Even the Moghul dominion did not extend beyond the north. Much part of the south was impervious to the foreign invasions. Even under the Moghul and other Muslim rulers, India's rural population enjoyed undisturbed life under native 'Sardars' and 'Jahagirdars'. Most of the India was impervious to the conquering Muslim rulers and even to the British, because they came in contact with the native officers of these rulers who collected taxes. The Indian culture in the rural India remained by far undisturbed. It was the culture of the cities, the population of elite and middleclass Indians that carried the influence of the culture

and the social aspects of the foreign rule. However, it must be borne in mind that Naipaul is writing from his own impressions of mostly the urban India.

This book is a documentation of Naipaul's second visit to India in 1975, the time of rather critical period in India after independence. Whereas *An Area of Darkness* deals with the nostalgic feelings over India, which will never be India of Naipaul's dreams, it appears that the second book is more emotionally well balanced, descriptive, analytical and with the sense of hope of Indian future. He examines India in more details, his thoughts and descriptions seem to be more integrated and less emotive. One notices an ordered and organized search through history, sociology, politics and literature replacing the chaotic alteration between acceptance and rejection of India in the earlier book. As an eminent critic Suman Gupta says,

The thesis of *India: A Wounded Civilization* is twofold: that the essential India, the old world India, is purely Hindu and that a typically Hindu psyche and Hindu attitudes to life are pervasive in modern India; and that the integral and purely Hindu India was conquered and dominated first by Islam and later by the British, which has resulted in a stultification of the intellectual development and creativity of the essentially Hindu India. (Gupta, 2010, 83)

As the above comment suggests, the present book takes the readers in the past of our country and explores Indian cultural history. One finds it difficult to agree with his thesis that there is stultification of the intellectual development of India, 'essentially Hindu India', because during the colonial and post-colonial period, India has emerged as one nation with its multi-religious population, which has developed intellectually, socially and politically. It is necessary first, to see what case Naipaul makes up to support his aforesaid argument.

IV.2 Naipaul's Preconceived Notions of India

India: A Wounded Civilization is similar to *An Area of Darkness* in its point of beginning. This book begins with 'Foreword' in which we notice the preconceived notion of Naipaul about India. He says:

India for me is a difficult country. It isn't my home and cannot be my home; and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it; I cannot travel only for the sights. I am at once too close and too far...A hundred years had been enough to wash me clear of many Indian religious attitudes; and without these attitudes the distress of India was –and is-almost insupportable. It has taken me much time....to define what separates me from the country: and understand how far the 'Indian' attitudes of someone like myself....have diverged from the attitudes of people to whom India is still whole. (Naipaul, 1977, X-XI)

From this 'Foreword', it is likely that the method of enquiry in this book hinges upon Naipaul's understanding of the history, society and the literature of India. It is necessarily different from the understanding of many Indians. Naipaul begins his second book with this thought of India which really sets the tone of the rest of the narration. In the above comment of Naipaul we understand that India, the land of his ancestors really attracts him continually. But, he is also aware of the fact that he can never identify himself as an 'Indian' in this country, at the same time he cannot detach himself completely from this land of his ancestors. The last sentence in the quotation above indicates that he is doubtful about India as a 'whole entity, one nation'.

IV.3 Indian Perspective in *India: A Wounded Civilization*

Naipaul's own personal background is closely connected with his observations of India. He considers himself an 'outsider' in India, but his background, his family history, though a hundred years estranged from India, are indelibly the part of his life. He tries to read India from the outsider's point of view. As the title suggest, he

considers Indian civilization to be the victim of hundreds of years of invasions, first of the Muslims, then of the British. In the forgoing chapter, I intend to critically examine his observations on Indian civilization.

IV.3.1 Eternal Continuity of India

The first part titled 'An Old Equilibrium' is an analysis of the psychology behind the eternal 'continuity' of India. He gives the example of the ancient kingdom of Vijaynagar. He makes an analysis of the systematic destruction of this great kingdom. According to him, it is a permanent loss of human talent and intellectual capacity. This led to the loss of historical sense. Hence the destruction was rendered complete and irreversible. He laments that the flourishing civilization was contracted after every conquest. Today with no more reality to survive, it draws on the legend for sustenance. All the terrible memories of violence were forgotten. People today talk about the glory of the past more than the act of destruction of this royal kingdom.

As the remnants of the past still survived in the form of irrigation canals, palaces and temples, it has become a tourist attraction. This process describes the continuity of India. He says that each time India was attacked; it lost its intellectual life and survived on legends of the past. A repeated process like this made India 'archaic' because knowledge and talent was continually lost. He also opines that the Kingdom of Vijaynagar is only representative place in India because the same process took place all over the country.

As in Vijaynagar, in the rest of India too, this resulted in a big gap between the talent behind its ancient monuments and cities and the deficiencies of the people who now live on these once flourishing areas. After independence, five-year plans were started for the sake of development. He points out that the institutions for growth and development were borrowed ones and therefore not bringing the desired result. He says that the past, once so revered, was unable to provide an alternative for the borrowed institutions and this was the crisis of India. He underlines the irrelevance of archaic India in the face of the new political and economic institutions.

The turbulence in India this time hasn't come from foreign invasion or conquests; it has been generated from within....The crisis of India is not only political or economic. The larger crisis is of a wounded old civilization that has at last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead. (Naipaul, 1977, 8)

Naipaul sees the crisis of India as the beginning of the loss of an old equilibrium. He thinks that such a situation is a kind of loss of history, of creative expertise and of a human energy.

IV.3.2 Karma Vs Non-Violence

Later he takes up R K Narayan's novels he has read earlier. He calls them as social comedies which are akin to Hindu religious fables. Then follows a detailed analysis of *Mr. Sampath*. Here Naipaul sees in the character of its hero, Srinivas a misinterpretation of the ideas of *karma* and non-violence. Srinivas, a reader of the *Upnishads* has read the same meaning into the Hindu idea of *nishkam karma* as the equivalent of 'non-doing'. The Hindu idea advocates that a person must perform his *karma* without thinking of benefits which are all illusory. It doesn't mean that a person should withdraw from all action. The dividing line is very thin and elastic. Hence Srinivas slips into non-action conveniently.

The Gandhian idea of non-violence was not passivity; it was a form of action. This too is misread by Srinivas as "non doing, non-interference, social indifference". (Naipaul, 1977, 13) He resorts to a "form of self-cherishing" which is totally dependent on the action of others. "It depends on the continuing activity of others...the rupees arriving from somewhere" (Naipaul, 1977, 13). For Naipaul this idea of religious surrender is parasitic and degenerate. In the fate of Srinivas, Naipaul sees the fate of vast Indian populace that had interpreted its religious philosophy in such a way that the equilibrium of their idea of themselves was maintained. They accepted distress as the divinely ordained predicament of humankind.

IV.3.3 Broken 'Cultural Heartland'

In the same chapter, Naipaul records his impressions of the farm workers and labourers of North Bihar and Rajasthan. According to him, Bihar, known as 'the cultural heartland' once is filled with cruelty and poverty more than two decades after independence. He is surprised to say that people do not question as they have resigned acceptance of suffering and poverty. Such total resignation leaves little ground for thoughts of change. In Rajasthan, he notices two different examples of how 'development' has come to the state. He comes across dams and irrigation schemes being worked out to remove their technical faults. In a model village, he sees a peasantry involved in acquiring latest agricultural expertise. There was electricity in the village. He says that all outward signs of development are conspicuously seen.

In spite of this development, women are still excluded from this sign of progress as they are under their veils even when the commissioner begins his important discussion. In Bundi, which was once a centre of art and had its own school of painting, Naipaul found that all its vitality had vanished. The Bundi castle was in a state of decay; the people of Bundi see themselves as being completely dependent on the power of the authority and do nothing more putting up an elaborate show of their difference to authority. They were 'less amenable to the commissioner's ideas'. (Naipaul, 1977, 21) They were secure in their condition and the only passion for honour. Apart from this, they could not be moved to any form of action. Their world was lost, and in order to maintain their old equilibrium, they had 'retreated to their last, impregnable defenses: their knowledge of who they were their caste, their *Karma*, their unshakable place in the scheme of things'. (Naipaul, 1977, 22) This was true of all of Indians because India was the truth for all these people. They thought that whatever happened to them is beyond human comprehension (Karma). So India was not to be judged, it was beyond that. In this idea of 'karma' lays the foundation of age-old equilibrium. He says that for Indians it is a proof of eternal continuity of India.

IV.3.4 India will Go on

In the next chapter, 'The Shattering World', Naipaul begins by quoting R. K. Narayan- "India will go on" (Naipaul, 1977, 9), and finds that even in the face of a crisis like the Emergency, the illusion of the old equilibrium survived. But there has been a change. Naipaul identifies this change in R. K. Narayan's journey as a writer from *Mr. Sampath* to *The Vendor of Sweets*. The sweet-vendor Jagan is a Gandhian, a pious Hindu, who has worked for the independence of India. But he does not pay his sales tax. In the first place, Jagan has no idea of what independence or self-governance means. He cheats the very same government for whose sake he had bravely taken beatings during the British Rule. His idea of a nation is limited to the idea of Gandhi. So Naipaul jokes that if Gandhi had asked people to pay their sales tax, Jagan would have surely done so. Naipaul sees in this double consciousness the double idea of Hindu morality: "How many Jagans exist who, conscious only of their Gandhian piety, their personal virtue, have mocked and undermined the independence for which they say they have worked?" (Naipaul, 1977, 29) Naipaul's argument is that the old equilibrium has shattered with the world opening up. He cites the example of Jagan's son with his foreign girlfriend to argue the emergence of new world in post-independence India, which needs different kind of devotion in order to bring about the progress. The old pastoral world cannot be re-established. The characters like Jagan's world, and ideologies could spell more Emergencies for India. He says that India needed to invest in science and industry. In this respect Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* works as a "satire on modern civilization and a proof of the violation of the shattering of the unity of the world in the fragile lives of people like Jagan". (Naipaul, 1977, 32) Jagan's only purpose in life is to maintain his own idea of purity, his own idea of Gandhinism so he maintains fair business with the customers. His idea was restricted to his own life so gradually it breaks; he flees the world in anguish. His renunciation is not the calm, composed and self-willed renunciation advocated by Hindu philosophy. He found himself at a point of no return. He fled, which signifies the final shattering of the old world.

Simultaneously, the Emergency was also the symptom of the problem of the dismantling of the old world. It was a proof that the society had broken down. Unfortunately, in India, it was seen as only a political crisis “which it was in the power of Mrs Gandhi or the opposition to resolve”. (Naipaul, 1977, 35) He feels that the Emergency did not set the things right. It made a show of terror but “established no new moral frame, it held out no promise for a better regulated future. It reinforced, if anything, the need to hide and hoard.” (Naipaul, 1977, 35) He thinks that problem needed deeper resolution. Naipaul traces the chaos of the Emergency to the blunders that had followed independence. The commitments of the people like Jagan helped India to gain freedom, it became directionless after independence. They did not have any idea of the responsibility of freedom, so they became self-centered as before. They forgot that the government would not function smoothly without the contribution of every individual in the society.

Hence Naipaul quotes Narayan's statement, 'India will go on', he does not see this shattering as negative, for him it was a positive beginning:

With independence and growth, chaos and a loss of faith, India was awakening to its distress and the cruelties that had always lain below its apparent stability, its capacity simply for going on. The old equilibrium had gone. But out of this chaos, out of the crumbling of the old Hindu system, and the spirit of rejection, India was learning new ways of seeing and feeling. (Naipaul, 1977, 27)

IV.3.5 Spirit of Rejection

The last section of the first chapter captures the spirit of rejection of many Indians. He notices the plays of Vijay Tendulkar dealing with this theme. First he takes *The Vultures* for analysis. For him the play signifies the end of all kinds of respects for the old values because of new opportunities of making money. Eventually people are getting more self-centered and individualistic. There is “no pure past, and religion can provide no retreat”. (Naipaul, 1977, 39) According to him Tendulkar's plays mark a

change in Indian sensibility. The hero of *Sakharam Binder* is a low caste man who works as a binder for living. He has rejected almost everything which is dear to Indian society including caste, religion, clan and family. He has not married but lives with "other men's discarded wives, whom he rescues from temples or streets". (Naipaul, 1977, 40) At the end of the play he is destroyed, but he is projected as a hero of the play. Sakharam Binder's rebellion signifies a big leap from the rebellion of Jagan's son in *The Vendor of Sweets*.

Naipaul describes his meeting with Tendulkar in which he finds another example of the fact that, for India, there could be no more retreats. Tendulkar, while working on a book on violence in India had travelled to various parts of the country. In Bihar, he had seen many things, which "he had believed never existed". (Naipaul, 1977, 40) But in his conversation, he talked of the beauty of the Ganga and did not refer to the tragic sights on its banks, in the villages and towns through which it flowed. Even Tendulkar with his new sensibility wanted to escape the horrors. He too yearned for retreat into the calmness of the old order in which these horrors didn't show up. This past couldn't be claimed now. The past in itself hadn't been an egalitarian one. It "enslaved one quarter of the population". (Naipaul, 1977, 43) By doing this, it fragmented the society. These fragmented parts were as directionless as the rest of the people and India was in chaos. In this way the first section of the book defines India as a land repeatedly wounded, now facing a revolt from the same forces that once held it together.

IV.3.6 Changing face of Middle and Lower Middle Class

The second part of the book 'A New Claim on the Land' describes the undercurrent in the middle and the lower middle classes of India. This section consists of two chapters capturing the movement of the village population towards the metropolis and the creation of the new working class. First chapter in it is entitled 'The Skyscrapers and the Chawls'. It draws a contrast between the advancement of industrial Bombay and the contradiction of un-accommodated workforce that makes its industries run. On the one hand these industries need this workforce as labour and on the other hand the city is not ready to accommodate this force. Hence the

workforce that comes from nearby villages spills on the streets and pavements at night. Naipaul observes, "The poor are needed as hands, as labour. But the city was not built to accommodate them". (Naipaul, 1977, 48) He says that glamorous skyscrapers offer majestic sight at night. In their shadows live the chawl and pavement dwellers. Originally these chawls were meant to accommodate the workers in the numerous textile mills of Bombay. So to own a chawl was even more important. There were others, poorer classes of workers who did not have the access to these chawls. Such a working class made their own colonies-squatters' settlements. Over the years, their settlements had grown into more organized residential areas and they had attached themselves to the Shiv Sena- the army named after the Maratha leader The Great Shivaji Maharaj. Naipaul notices a kind of movement here. At the very grass root level there was an attempt at a more organized community living. The interests of the individual in particular and the community in general were taken care of.

Naipaul comments that the settlements had Shiv Sena's committee offices which were "dedicated as much to municipal self-regulation as to the Sena's politics: industrial workers beginning to apply something of the discipline of the factory floor to the areas where they lived". (Naipaul, 1977, 54) He observes that Sena politics worked at different levels. Apart from political power, it inspired self-respect and belonging in the people at the bottom of the social ladder. These Sena people maintained the goodwill amongst the people by paying attention to improving the quality of the people of chawls and the settlement dwellers. Naipaul notices that quality of life in these areas was extremely poor. Though Municipal Corporation provided washing areas and community lavatories, the task of cleaning up was left to the municipal workers. When the sweeper didn't turn up, people just closed their eyes to the filth and continued with their life.

Naipaul says, "The Sena army is xenophobic". (Naipaul, 1977, 52) They had their own complications. They had only Maharashtra on their agenda for those born in Maharashtra. Because of its popularity, it wielded tremendous power. Naipaul says:

...the Sena is a great contracting force, not from India, but from a Hindu system, which, in the conditions of today, in

the conditions of industrial Bombay, has at last been felt to be inadequate. It is in part a reworking of the Hindu system. Men do not accept chaos; they ceaselessly seek to remake their world: they reach out for such ideas as are accessible and fit their need. (Naipaul, 1977, 52-53)

According to Naipaul Sena had built a large base for them because it aligned with masses of the urban poor, which doubled and redoubled continuously. Naipaul observes that real movement in Bombay was taking place at a lower level in spite of urbanization and industrialization. The dimensions of this grass root- movement were tremendous because it had begun to give the people an idea of themselves:

For the Sena men, and the people they lead, the world was new; they saw themselves at the beginning of things: unaccommodated men making a claim on their land for the first time, and out of chaos evolving their own philosophy of community and self-help. (Naipaul, 1977, 61)

It seems that Naipaul's earlier negative observations on Bombay in *An Area of Darkness* mark a sharp shift in this book. Because he is accompanied by an engineer who takes him to different places like the squatters' settlements, in him he notices a genuine vision, foresight and dedication. In this chapter we find Naipaul more analytical and objective in his observations.

IV.3.7 Development in Disguise

From Bombay the next chapter 'The House of Grain', takes us to the new development of Poona. He also comments on the new co-operative irrigation scheme being laid down in nearby villages. Movement was to be seen in the 'graduate' daughter-in-law in Patel's house, in people waiting for the morning bus, in the zeal of the enterprising but shortsighted restaurateur turned water supplier who accepted chapattis in lieu of cash. There was a movement here, in the co-operative digging of the lift-canal and in restaurateur's water supply but Naipaul feels that this movement was less than productive. He thinks that it could have been more effective and productive

by the application of simple mechanical skills. For him, something is lacking in this development.

Naipaul's visit to a village and his meeting with the village Sarpanch Patel puts forth a main reason for the unequal development of India. In this part of the chapter, Naipaul takes a close look at the social mechanism of the rural Indian society. The Patel, the biggest landowner in the village continued to be the traditional symbol of power. The elected sarpanch, who ought to have been the real head of the village, was a mere puppet. The traditional loyalty to the Patel continued. He was the actual master. Independence had not changed much. His house had all amenities. "Electric light, ready water, an outhouse: the Patel was the only man in the village to possess them all..." (Naipaul. 1977, 74) That the Patel was progressive and not opposed to cooperative projects such as irrigation scheme, was a boon for the villagers, a mark of his charitable nature for which the villagers were thankful:

It was necessary to be in the village, to see the Patel, and his attendants, to understand the nature of power of that simple man, to see how easily such a man could, if he wished, frustrate the talk from Delhi about minimum wages, for the abolition of untouchability, the abolition of rural indebtedness. How could the laws be enforced? Who would be the policeman in this village? (Naipaul. 1977, 74-75)

Naipaul, thus, observes that independence had brought development but that development had touched the people unequally. The old pattern of the landed masters and landless labourers continued. Democracy and Panchayati Raj became toys in the hands of traditional power wielders. Officials, politicians and administrators were sucked into the pattern of the ruler and the ruled. Worse still, the instruments of democracy could easily be turned into instruments of a more organized oppression. Naipaul has explained the incessant flow of people towards the cities in this context. The people coming to cities were "fleeing not only from landlessness but also from

tyranny and the rule in a thousand villages of men like the Patel and the sarpanch". (Naipaul, 1977, 76)

IV.3.8 Naxalism- a Political Failure?

According to Naipaul, another form of escape from oppression was to be found in the origin of communities of dacoits in the central and North-Western India. Naipaul does not explain the phenomenon in detail but moves on to explain yet another attempt at an escape from oppression- the *Naxalbari* movement in Bengal and Andhra. He thinks that it is tragic attempt at a revolution. The tragedy of the *Naxalbari* movement was that it could not explain its ideology to a people. This ideology degenerated into the idea of the enemy and was lost:

Naxalism was an intellectual tragedy, a tragedy of idealism, ignorance and mimicry: middle-class India, after the Gandhian upheaval, incapable of generating ideas and institutions of its own, needing constantly in the modern world to be inducted into the art, science and ideas of other civilizations, not always understanding the consequences, and this time borrowing something deadly, somebody else's idea of revolution. (Naipaul, 1977, 82)

He opines that an increase of such movements in different parts of the country is a political failure.

'A New Claim on the Land' sees India on the move. The movement came into being because the cities and the industries gave people an alternative to escape the predicament of a humiliating and oppressed existence as landless poor in the Patel-centric agrarian set up. Naipaul holds that any study of India that does not take into account this movement at the grass-roots is 'worthless'. This movement marked a great shift from the ideas that ruled the country immediately after independence:

The poor are no longer the occasion for sentiment or holy alms-giving: land reform no longer a matter for the religious conscience. (Naipaul, 1977, 82)

Here, Naipaul tries to throw light on Naxalite movement and its failure in becoming a mass-movement. By way of interaction with the people actively involved in the movement, he puts forth their experiences. However, he feels, the emergence of Naxalism should be considered as political failure. It shows the inability of the existing government to control the rise of such thinking.

IV.3.9 Gandhianism

The four chapters in the third and last part titled 'Not Ideas, But Obsessions', deal with conflicting ideas. The common thread that holds this narrative together is the idea of Indians struggling amidst their ambivalences, as victims of mimicry, as people incapacitated by borrowing institutions for so long that any original action could not be possible.

First of all Naipaul takes up the much disputed analysis of Mahatma Gandhi in the first chapter called 'A Defect of Vision'. This analysis seems to be the continuation of his discussion in *An Area of Darkness*. He presents original interpretations of the victories and failures of Gandhiji here. He makes a comparative analysis of Gandhiji's tremendous success before independence with the failure of his ideas in post-independence era. For him it is the shattering failure after independence and subsequently the degeneration of his ideas and ideals. He says that Gandhi energized people in an unprecedented manner and created a form of struggle to which the Indian psyche could easily relate. But after doing this, he had left the energized nation to itself. He had shaken up a sleeping civilization but had not taught to observe, analyze and understand itself. He had built a nation of followers with no leadership. All that remained in the name of leadership was endless mimicry.

Gandhi's inward looking philosophy sustained him, but could not sustain India. What would happen to a nation of inward looking people to whom the outer world mattered only up to that extent to which it affected the inner? This, says Naipaul, was Gandhi's defect of vision. Naipaul traces the seeds of this short-sightedness in Gandhi's selective "blindness" to those external incidents or landscapes, which were not directly connected to his inner sphere of experience, understanding or development:

Gandhi's self-absorption was part of his strength. Without it he would have done nothing and might even have been destroyed. But this self-absorption there was, as always, a kind of blindness. (Naipaul, 1977, 88-89)

Naipaul following Sudhir Kakar, says in this respect and concludes that the relationship of Indians to their outside world is more close to a certain stage in a childhood stage when a person relates to the world through the mother. Similarly, Indians always turned inwards, seeking the security of a life ordered by the society. Left on his own, the individual is lost because he has no idea of himself. He can project himself only through the security of an ordered society with its lists of rules and rituals. Gandhiji harnessed this unquestioning faith in truth and religion and confused the British, but he did not know how to carry on. Independence was won, the enemy was defeated and the nation sat itself down in anticipation of a *Ramrajya*- a rule by a Lord Ram. To a people so used to be governed, the idea of *swaraj*, self-governance, did not strike home. So post-independence India withdrew itself, waiting for things to take care of themselves, waiting for *Ramrajya* to descend on the country.

To explain this point further, Naipaul takes the example of a character of the Acharya from U. R. Ananthmurti's novel *Samskara*, and clarifies the great Indian reliance on non-action. The Acharya, a learned man, had not learnt to analyze situations and offer solutions. He was content to scan books for answers; he had a greater belief in God's decision that would, through the mystical falling of the flower, make itself known to him. Naipaul comments that people like Acharya "lead instinctive lives; crippled by rules... they make up society without a head". (Naipaul. 1977, 97)

In Naipaul's analysis one notices deeper understanding and knowledge of India and of Gandhiji. So he attempted a study and an analysis of what differentiated Gandhiji from millions of Indians that he led. He says:

But there is an important difference. The Acharya is imprisoned in his dead civilization; he can only define himself within it. He has not, like Gandhi in England, had to

work out his faith and decide where-in the wider world-he stands. (Naipaul. 1977, 98)

Then we come across Naipaul's much disputed argument that Gandhi, on account of his sensitivity to external experience, saw India very objectively. He knew how the Indian qualities of complacency, tolerance and faith in religion could be positively used. It got immediate success. But Gandhi could not understand the shortcomings of this method. He had taken people out of their traditional world of caste, clan and religion and shown them a goal in the form of independence. People followed whole heartedly and 'Gandhianism' swept the entire nation. But Naipaul thinks that there was defect of vision in this process on the part of Gandhi. He thinks that Gandhiji took the people out of their world but did not teach them to look at themselves as individuals:

When men cannot observe, they don't have ideas: they have obsessions. When people live instinctive lives, something like amnesia steadily blurs the past. (Naipaul. 1977, 100)

Hence he comes to much debated conclusion by saying that one man's short-sightedness led a nation astray because it was this one man's vision that had set it in motion. I think, Naipaul's analysis of Gandhiji is based on limited knowledge or reading of Gandhiji. The argument of Naipaul that one man's short-sightedness led a nation astray seems to be baseless because many factors are responsible for the present scenario of the nation. Gandhiji's followers were anxious to get into power, and did not have the vision of their leader. One cannot blame Gandhiji for short-sightedness of his followers.

IV.3.10 Assimilation of Diverse Influences

The next chapter 'Synthesis and Mimicry' interrogates the claim that, India, over the years, has always assimilated diverse influences successfully. First, Naipaul attacks on 'intermediate technology', which was supposed to provide a link between the advanced scientific methods and the conventional agrarian methods employed in India

from yesteryears. This 'intermediate technology' turned into futile experiment as it introduced absurd things like the wired up bull, the harvesting shoes, foot operated harvesting shears and so on. According to Naipaul, it was a needless complicated experiment beyond the understanding of a layman. He goes on to say that it was not synthesis but an intellectual confusion and that too in an institution that was meant to contribute to national development. The only direct evidence of cultural synthesis was to be found in the pre-British schools of painting.

According to Naipaul, with the coming of British, the break with the past was final. Old wisdom, knowledge, traditional craftsmanship and architecture died out. There was no synthesis, no assimilation, but a complete incongruous replacement. He gives the example of climatically ill-suited guesthouse of Jaisalmer and the thoughtlessly designed roof of the modern airport building in Ahmadabad. The East-West encounter that occurred after the coming of the British was superficial because there was no Indian tradition to receive the new influences. The Indian tradition, the basic medium to accept new influences, did not exist and the influences themselves struck out absurdly. Hence synthesis was reduced to mimicry:

The Indian past can no longer provide inspiration for the Indian present...the West is too dominant, and too varied; and India continues imitative and insecure...India, without its own living traditions, has lost the ability to incorporate and adapt; what it borrows it seeks to swallow whole. For all its appearance of cultural continuity, for all the liveliness of its arts of dance, music and cinema, India is incomplete: a whole creative side has died. It is the price India has had to pay for its British period. (Naipaul. 1977, 113)

Naipaul comments that India keeps on functioning on borrowed institutions. The press, the education system, the judiciary are all borrowed and stand as obstacles in the people's perception of themselves and their idea of India. The Indian press did not seek to put India "in touch with itself", the Indian judicial system designed by the

British could not perform "the law's constant reassessing, reforming role". (Naipaul. 1977. Pg-119) The law steers clear of the numerous misinterpretations of *dharma* that are in circulation:

The law avoids the collision with *dharma*. Yet it is this *dharma* that the new must grapple with if the law is to have a 'dynamic role'. (Naipaul. 1977. Pg-121)

After putting forth such analysis, he states that India needs to step out of its comfort zone of explaining its incongruities and contradictions as "synthesis". It has to abandon its imported ideas and ideologies; it had to question and arrive at an understanding of itself. And for that, India needs to shed its policies of total acceptance and complacency. It is true that India had to borrow the idea of democracy and secularism from the west, but it was not blind imitation of the west. The Indian constitution had to allow for its multiplicity of religious, castes, social and economic disparity, and make provision for them. It was a gigantic task, not mere imitation.

IV.3.11 Paradise Lost?

The next chapter 'Paradise Lost' takes us in post-emergency period of India. It records people's reaction to the emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. The opening line of this chapter is "We are like zoo" (Naipaul, 1977, 122), spoken by a middle-class lady in Delhi. It suggests people's disappointment with the political situation in the capital, reaction all over the country was no more different than this. This chapter also highlights the confused agenda of the opposition and even more confusing line of action. In the opinion of Naipaul political sterility is complete. There was neither *swaraj* nor *Ramrajya*. After almost thirty years of independence, Gandhianism was reduced to a show of *khadi* and long impassioned speeches. But the people simply waited for things to take care of themselves. This is not true. Naipaul forgets how people rose against mortal grasp of congress and gave it a crushing defeat. Later history has shown great many changes in the political structures of India.

The last chapter is a question mark with the title 'Renaissance or Continuity?' This chapter continues to shed light on Gandhianism and its caricatured version

practiced through a series of acts of mimicry. Here he makes comparison between Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave. Naipaul sees a "mimic mahatma" in Vinoba Bhave. His actions had not served India in any way. The living evidence of the futility of such mimicry is Bihar where Bhave had performed much of his land-gift walk schemes:

Once, on the march, he said that untouchables did work human beings shouldn't do; for the reason they should be given land, to become tillers...The whole point of Gandhi's message was lost. (Naipaul, 1977, 152)

He thinks that Bhave's life is a parody of Gandhi without actual involvement or vision for the causes at hand. Bhave believed that walks and fasts would solve all problems. He did not know the practical reason behind Gandhi's walks and marches. Gandhi's marches connected people to ideas at a time when communication and commutation were both difficult. Bhave's marches overlooked that. The concept of *dharma* degenerated. Through years of conquest and oppression, it came to be associated with unquestioning servitude and patient suffering. The only way to claim past glory was to be found in intellectual development. Naipaul completely misunderstands Vinoba's 'Bhudan Movement'. Vinobaji knew that law cannot do everything, which was what Gandhiji also knew. There ought to be awakening of social consciousness among people. Vinobaji did achieve this. In Maharashtra, the land of those who did not till it, was given to the real tillers. The law was enacted, which was the indirect result of Vinobaji's movement.

Finally he says that India must shed its longing for a past that it hardly understands. The past is just a glorious abstraction because with the amnesias that followed each conquest, India lost touch with itself:

While India tries to go back to an idea of its past, it will not possess that past or be enriched by it. The past can now be possessed only by inquiry and scholarship, by intellectual rather than spiritual discipline. The past has to be seen to be dead; or the past will kill. (Naipaul. 1977, 161)

In this way, Naipaul has attempted an analysis of the problems and the complications of India and has in the process, once again stirred controversy. The reactions are typical and follow the same pattern as those that were evoked by *An Area of Darkness*.

IV.4 Naipaul's Evaluation of Indian Culture

While commenting on the social and historical aspects of India, 'culture' is one of the major aspects that Naipaul focuses through his narratives. In the later part of the chapter, I have tried to put forth Naipaul's perspective of Indian culture. In the 'Foreword' to this book, Naipaul comments:

No civilization was so little equipped to cope with the outside world: no country was so easily raided and plundered, and learned so little from its disasters. (Naipaul, 1977, IX)

Cultural changes occurred in India, but always was a source of imitation of the West as Naipaul observes:

India continues imitative and insecure, as a glance at the advertisements and illustrations of any Indian magazine will show. India, without its own living traditions, has lost the ability to incorporate and adapt: what it borrows it seeks to swallow whole. For all its appearance of cultural continuity, for all the liveliness of its arts of dance, music and cinema, India is incomplete: a whole creative side has died. (Naipaul, 1977, 113)

Complete copying of the culture of 'other' nations is seen as a drawback for India, according to Naipaul. India remains 'incomplete' due to the borrowing of foreign culture and the unawareness of the country's own potentials. This hints at the notion that blind influences of the predominant cultures should have been avoided by India. But it seems that Naipaul is not taking into account good aspects of Indian culture.

Manjit Inder Singh, comments on Naipaul's inability to see qualities that Indian culture gained by assimilating foreign ideas. He explains in *V. S. Naipaul*:

While the revolutionary-political jingoism of race, tribe, culture and region gathers momentum every passing year, the slippage of fixed, older form of identity presided over by cosmopolitan forces and professional opportunities have increased the entry of one race, nationality and culture into another beyond imagination. No one is purely one person or one thing. The dubious result of the imperialist consolidation of mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale reflect a dissolved amorphous life in unlikely landscapes and settings. (Manjit, 1998, 134)

This idea brought by Manjit Inder Singh shows that India need not be blamed for borrowing foreign culture. This comment is in contrast with Naipaul's idea of India being a homogeneous identity derived from its past. It can be seen how he is quite unsure of the idea of a monolithic culture as seen from the interview with Dilip Padgaonkar that was published in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*:

Nobody really lives in a single culture. Even Africa has been subjected to many, many influences. To talk about a "pure African" culture makes little sense. Take Indian cooking: it has ingredients from so many cultures. Indeed how can you say "I am an Indian?" India means the world, in a way. People live in several worlds at the same time. But many do not want to admit this. They stick to foolish notions. For example I came across someone in New York who said: "I drink coco cola because I am an American." But you don't drink coffee because you are an Arab, or tea because you are a Chinese or Chocolate because you are a Mexican. I should be able to say: "I drink coco cola because I like coco cola. (Panwar, 2007, 56)

It is clear from this comment that cultural homogeneity is not required while taking into account individual likes and dislikes. This comment also emphasizes that culture need not stand as a homogeneous/monolithic idea. It has extended horizons and is flexible as far as human ideas can undergo change. Manjit Inder Singh, comments in *V. S. Naipaul*, on the need for redefining cultural homogeneity:

The very concepts of homogeneous national cultures, the accepted or contiguous transmissions of historical traditions, or 'organic' ethnic communities, are in a profound process of redefinition. The earlier, over riding idea of pure, national identity can only be achieved through the negation of the complex inter weavings of history. (Singh M, 1998 ,129)

From the above comment one notices that national culture cannot be made to fit within a frame work according to the individual's ideas. The need for Indian culture to exist as homogeneous without seeking contribution from external sources does not pave the way to any development of the civilization. Naipaul's descriptions of Indian culture as mimicking or imbibing western values does not hold good in the face of the process of acculturation that goes on universally. . He is against the idea of using Western yardsticks for studying Indian civilization as observed:

European methods of historical inquiry, arising out of one kind of civilization, with its own developing ideas of the human condition cannot be applied to Indian civilization: the European approach elucidates little, has the effect of an unsuccessful attempt to equate India with Europe, and make nonsense of the stops and starts of Indian civilization, the brief flowerings, the long periods of sterility, men forever claimed by the instinctive life, continuity turning to barbarism. (Naipaul, 1977. 116-117)

Eventhough Naipaul claims that European ideologies should not be used as yardsticks for assessing India; it seems that, he consciously or unconsciously does the same. Bruce King comments on Naipaul's views of India that were mixed up with his Western ideologies. He explains in *Modern Novelists: V. S. Naipaul* thus:

V. S. Naipaul is a rationalist, secular, a strong believer in Western individualism and skepticism, although emotionally attracted towards Indian fatalism, passivity and philosophical notions of the world as illusion. Both world views are together, competing in his writings. (King, 1993, 5)

This comment highlights that Naipaul's 'passivity' towards India and his attraction towards the West are due to the competing world views that he had. He criticizes Indian culture and traditions from the Western mind-set. The foreigner's vision of India is presented by Naipaul, through the words of middle-class lady in Delhi. She said: "We are like a zoo. Perhaps we should change." (Naipaul, 1977, 122) The 'gaze' on the Indians is peculiar due to the differences in culture. This comment of an Indian makes the writer observe, "I was a visitor. She intended a rebuke, possibly an insult, but it was easy to let it pass. India was like a zoo because India was poor and cruel and had lost its way." (Naipaul, 1977, 122) The reason for the 'gaze' of the foreigners is explained by presenting the land and the people as 'poor', 'cruel', and 'lost its way'. Indian civilization has become a show piece in the eyes of the 'foreigners'. The 'zoo' imagery used by the writer in his narrative makes the Indian condition worse and pathetic as that of animals.

Cultural chaos was the major backdrop that Naipaul used, to portray the decay of Indian civilization. It could be considered as a carefully constructed platform on which he could build up his narrative firmly. India is presented by the writer as a 'strange' land without cultural homogeneity to fit to his narration. Naipaul explains the feeling that he had about India thus:

India, which I visited for the first time in 1962, turned out to be a strange land. A hundred years had been enough to wash me clean of my Indian religious attitudes, and without these attitudes the distress of India was-and is-almost insupportable. It has taken me much time to come to terms with the strangeness of India, to define what separates me from the country: and to understand how far the 'Indian attitudes of someone like me, a member of a small and remote community in the new world, have diverged from the attitudes of people to whom India is still whole. (Naipaul, 1977, XI)

It appears that the 'strangeness' that the writer felt with India was mainly due to his Trinidadian identity and his hundred years' estrangement from India. Naipaul's travel narratives could be seen as presenting the writer as distanced from his homeland. His Indian travel narratives are likely to be an outcome of a purely objective vision of India by the writer without much enquiry into the past of the country. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, talks about Naipaul's vision of India:

In texts such as *India: A Wounded Civilization*, he sees Indian culture as having become one that endlessly repeats its own truisms: even the glorious Vijayanagara was a facile imitation of something that had gone before. Nothing new was possible, because the old was not properly understood. The first thing that strikes most writers on India: its multicultural *mélange*, its free appropriations, its simultaneous motion in many different directions is of little interest to Naipaul. (Panwar, 2007, 45)

Pratap Bhanu Mehta focuses purely on objective vision that Naipaul had in his travel narrative. Naipaul does not see any significance in the past glory of India. Naipaul's unawareness of the real glory of India could be seen in the comment: "There

are University students in Bangalore, two hundred miles away, who haven't even heard of it. It isn't only because it was so completely wiped out, but also because it contributed so little: it was itself a reassertion of the past." (Naipaul, 1977, 5) The 'ravaged monuments' are presented by the writer as a 'reassertion' of the past that contributed 'so little' to the progress of Indian civilization. These comments were made by Naipaul through total ignorance of the cultural history of India. He accuses Indians in his travel narrative of being unaware of the past glory of India but, he himself appears to ignore the past grandeur that India had. He has questioned the existence of the Indian identity in his next travel narrative *India: A Million Mutinies Now*:

The idea of an Indian community-in effect, a continental idea of our Indian identity-made sense only when the community was very small, a minority, and isolated. In the torrent of India, with its hundreds of millions, where the threat was of chaos and the void, that continental idea was no comfort at all. People needed to hold on to smaller ideas of who and what they were: they found stability in the smaller groupings of region, clan, caste, family. (Naipaul, 1990, 9)

The Indian identity as seen from this comment was not that of knowing each other, but the people's identity, according to Naipaul, was that of being a social group divided on the basis of caste, region and family. According to him, this is one of the major reasons for India's cultural decay. Even though he tries to see India from the view point of an Indian, he could not place himself in the position of being an Indian. Manjit Inder Singh's comments, in *V. S. Naipaul*, on the vision of India in Naipaul's narrative:

This cyclic pattern of un belonging to the Carribean, India or the West has been voiced as the undoing of Naipaul as a writer by many fellow West Indian writers who see Naipaul's inability to nourish a positive response as a sign

of his inner falsity and deliberated evasion of sordid reality. (Singh M, 1998, 191)

This comment throws light on the psyche of the writer while narrating India. His Trinidadian life style made him disagree with the Indian communal identity.

The Indian concept of family, caste and clan are indigestible to the writer as he was unaccustomed to all these. Naipaul tries to assess India's progress during various time periods when the country underwent social and political changes. His travels were the attempts to understand more about his ancestry and about the culture to which he belongs. This observation could be supported by the comments of Peter Hulme, in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*: "Subsequently, in no fewer than three travel books, of increasing complexity, Naipaul has written about India, a country he returns to at least in part for complex reasons of personal heritage." (Hulme, 2000, 89) Personal reasons also provided inspiration for Naipaul's travel to India. India, according to him, remained as a symbol of a shattered culture to the external world, even though the country had gained new freedom. This comment shows the subjective position that Naipaul had taken in narrating about India. The speciality of these travel narratives is that he is able to shift his position as an Indian and Trinidadian while voicing out his opinion about the country.

Naipaul tried to make a detailed analysis of the culture and tradition of Indian society through his travels. The knowledge that he gained of such an inquiry could be seen as entirely contradictory from the glory of which India could boast of. He remarks in the interview published in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*:

The essence of literature, inquiry and philosophy is a constant examination of oneself and one's world and one's own culture. One hopes to leave the world with different ideas than those given to one when one enters the world. (Panwar, 2007, 56)

This comment tells us that he had an entirely different picture of India when he was about to leave the country. This picture of India was different from the notions

that he had when he entered the country. Kate Teltscher, comments, in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, about Naipaul's response to India:

In twentieth-century texts, particularly those published after independence in 1947, India offers a site for the interrogation of the writer's own identity. This is obviously the case with the Trinidadian-born, British resident V. S. Naipaul who, over three books and nearly thirty years, chronicled his response to Independent India. (Teltscher, 2002, 194)

The 'individual identity' of Naipaul as a traveller visiting India itself is an area of interrogation as he is psychologically detached from India due to the Trinidadian cultural baggage that he carried and is physically attached with India but affected by a 'culture shock'. Still there remains a question about whether Naipaul is the right person to talk about India? This question arises due to his dual Indo-Trinidadian identity. Dileep Padgoankar, comments on the genuineness of Naipaul's narration, even though he has a dual cultural identity, by citing the examples from *Culture and Imperialism*, as evident in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*: "In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said enlarges upon the idea that the identity of a nation depends on new and different kinds of visions, nations are defined also by their natives who live in exile, the political figure between domains, between homes, and between languages." (Panwar, 2007, 58) This comment emphasizes that Naipaul has the right to narrate about India as he claims to have understanding about the two cultural domains to which he belongs. 'Attitude' of the writer, while documenting his experiences, hence has an important role in the vision of India. It stresses the idea that one's personal opinions of a particular place that he/she visits need not be the view point of the indigenous people in the country. However, 'attitude' of the writer about the people and place, has only restricted relevance.

Manjit Inder Singh, comments in *V. S. Naipaul*, on the strangeness that Naipaul felt in India, as follows:

Naipaul goes on to elaborate his sides as a man sympathetic to the ways of his family and community, yet internally unwilling to participate in its rituals, skeptical and distrustful of other communal groupings. (Singh, 1998, 190)

This comment shows that Naipaul does distance himself from India knowingly or unknowingly and does not share the beliefs of his family and take part in their religious activities even though his tone of narrative is sympathetic towards the people. The reason for this distancing was the feeling of alienation he felt though a hundred years of separation of his family from India. .

The strangeness, that the writer felt, in India, had its impact on his travel narratives. This has made the writer portray India as a 'strange' land. Manjit Inder Singh criticizes him in *V. S. Naipaul*, on this strangeness that is reflected in Naipaul's narratives:

The claustrophobia, the exhaustion of the exile-traveller dangling amidst alien surroundings marks another turning-point in Naipaul's fiction." (Singh, 1998, 144)

This comment shows the dissatisfaction that Naipaul felt in India. It seems that the dissatisfaction that the writer felt in India was self inflicted by him due to the 'strangeness' that he felt about the people and the places. This type of presentation of Indian culture is critiqued by Manjit Inder Singh when he comments on the style employed by the Naipaul in his narrative. He remarks in *V. S. Naipaul*:

Naipaul has been trying to locate the colonial/imperial enclosures, and discuss the questions of transplanted culture and forced inspirations, of stunted growth and distorted histories, and present the great divide in the world one is trapped in works. (Singh, 1998, 21)

From this comment of Manjit Inder Singh, we get an idea of Naipaul's point of view towards colonial India that has lost her authenticity. He tries to judge Indian society and culture from outside rather than from within.

A noteworthy point at this juncture is that for all the disillusionment that Naipaul has presented in his travel narratives, India stands as a platform that the writer had already set. This is a narrative strategy employed by the writer to present social and cultural decay of India through his travel narratives. The visions of Naipaul can be seen as purely Westernized and unsentimental towards the people whom he is presenting. This observation can be substantiated with the comment of Kate Teltscher, travel critic, in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*: "The turn towards oral history in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is uncharacteristic both of Naipaul's oeuvre and, more generally, of contemporary travel writing. With the writer's subjectivity centre stage, India usually serves as a backdrop - be it charming, exotic, infuriating, or comic-to the narrator's travels." (Teltscher, 2002, 194) From this comment, it can be seen how India served as the best backdrop to present all the disillusionment that the writer felt.

Through the protagonist Jagan, in R. K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*, Naipaul quotes Jagan to underline the common Indian's point of view about the ups and downs in life. Jagan, the character speaks: "Why do you blame the country for everything? It has been good enough for four hundred millions, remembering the heritage of *Ramayana* and *Bhagavad Gita* and all the trials and sufferings he had undergone to win Independence." (Naipaul, 1977, 43) This comment by Jagan, is symptomatic of withdrawal which has hampered men intellectually and did not allow them to face challenge. Naipaul emphasizes how this philosophy has made Indian vulnerable and defeated in spirit. The use of the narrative voice of Jagan does fictionalize the travel narratives. Naipaul's narrative ends with an optimistic note for the development of India. He explains in: "The past can now be possessed only by inquiry and scholarship, by intellectual rather than spiritual discipline. Past has to be seen to be dead: or the past will kill." (Naipaul, 1977, 161) From this comment we can see that Naipaul's vision of India is more consolidated and focussed on the country's future, predicting the

changes that may occur in the civilization in due course, leaving a positive note for the people. But at the same place he is commenting against spiritual discipline and highlights the need for intellectual scholarship. This is a negative remark on Indian ideologies. Mel Gussow, remarked: "The tone of his book signifies a certain mellowing on his part, but it is clear that he is still a man of the most passionate convictions." (Gussow, 1991, 2) This comment shows that Naipaul wrote the Indian travel narratives by keeping a clear intention/motive of what needs to be highlighted through his narrative. His travel narratives are especially meant for appeal to the Western readers.

Critics like Bruce King were also able to find hidden motives in Naipaul's narrative. He remarks in *Modern Novelists: V. S. Naipaul* thus: "Eventually he found an additional source of income in travelling to and reporting on the social and cultural problems of other parts of the world, especially the newly independent nations." (King, 1993, 3) From this comment, Bruce King aims to say that the motive of Naipaul's narrative could not only be seen as a mode to revive the past history of India but also has a hidden, personal intention. It also had brought him fame and became a source of income. But these aspects are of less significance considering the real value that the narratives have for the readers in the academic circles as they talk about the culture of a foreign place/people. The personal gains that Naipaul achieved through his travels is mentioned in *Modern Novelists: V. S. Naipaul*, by Bruce King thus: "Such travel corresponded with Naipaul's own need to find new subject matter beyond his memories of Trinidad and provided him with a more interesting life than the solitary existence of a novelist: it contributed to his awareness of the wider world." (King, 1993, 3) Thus, travel narratives do provide personal gains for the narrator and readers. It provides a general awareness about a foreign land and its people. The culture of the people could also be studied through such accounts.

It seems that Naipaul's Trinidadian identity had greatly influenced him in his documentation of India. He does not wish to identify himself with India as seen from the distant picture that he presents in his narrative. The cultural baggage of the Trinidadian identity, that Naipaul carried along with him during his travels made him distance himself from India. Hence there is always a clash in the writer's

documentation, between the two cultural identities to which the writer belongs. India is hence described as a 'difficult country' by the writer. Chandra Chatterjee, talks about the writer's feeling of closeness and his ability to distance himself from India, in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* thus:

Naipaul's method is that of travel and discovery, and his preliminary strategy is to be aware of non-attachment. Attachment to India is triggered off on the one hand by scraps of Indianness that formed part of his racial memory and on the other by encounters and observations that lead him to understand the place India will hold in his creative imagination. (Panwar, 2007, 96)

Perhaps, the physical and mental distancing that Naipaul tried to maintain in his mind during his narration of India was to make his views on India unbiased. The psychological unfamiliarity that the writer felt with India cannot be fully discarded in this context. Bruce King, comments, in *Modern Novelists: V. S. Naipaul*, on the unfamiliarity that Naipaul felt when he visited India:

Although he claims that writing does not come easily to him, except during a few very brief periods he has had no other employment. For his first twenty years in England he never felt at home and is still aware of himself as an outsider. (King, 1993, 1)

This comment shows that there existed a clash between the two 'cultural identities' that the writer had. This has led him to live a discontented life in India as well as in Trinidad. This is the reason why Naipaul could be seen as disillusioned writer. Manjit Inder Singh, comments about the dislocation that Naipaul felt during his journey, in his book: *V. S. Naipaul*. He comments:

This migration, global movement of many sorts situates the individual very often inevitably, torn between on the one hand the country of his origin and on the other, the

country of residence, the metropolis-London, Paris, New York - former colonial citadels, looked at with illusory promises of justice, betterment, racial tolerance, and so forth. This kind of inner conflict and tension, though it overlaps so much of the diasporic culture or expatriate literature, also accounts for striking new identities, canceling out old ones. (Singh, 1998, 51)

The overlap of the Indo-Trinidadian identity has made changes in Naipaul's perception of India. The Indian travel narratives were written amidst the culture chaos that the writer felt in India, even though the Indians were living a peaceful life after the Independence. Manjit Inder Singh, comments on the writer's vision of India, in *V. S. Naipaul* thus:

The striking distinction is that Naipaul speaks from a place that is not his (according to him), a platform that could hardly be called nationalistic or emotionally tied up to a dream of any final adjustment." (Singh, 1998, 21)

Another noteworthy aspect of the study of the encounter of Indian culture by Naipaul is that he assessed India in relation to Trinidad. This in turn created a 'culture shock' in the writer. This can be the major reason for his discontent with India as evident from the present book. Bruce King remarks: "But the question of comparison did not arise. The world outside India was to be judged by its own standards-India was not to be judged. India was only to be experienced in the Indian way." (King, 1993, 35) Thus, India is represented by Naipaul based on his individual experiences in the country.

Naipaul's India series of travel narratives could also be seen as shifting its focus from the descriptions of the Indian religion, beliefs etc., to the mannerisms of the people and showing that culture promotes subjugation of humanity in the form of customs and traditions that the people follow. This is explained in the description of the Rajasthani woman. Indian women were presented by the writer as slowly

retrieving into their household chores as part of their culture. The voices of the women were muted according to the writer when he had visited Rajasthan. He comments: "The women had withdrawn—so many of them, below their red or orange Rajasthani veil, only girls, children, but already with children of their own." (Naipaul, 1977, 30) Naipaul's attention does focus only on a smaller canvas to the women who voluntarily have chosen to live for the welfare of their family. He does not point to the women who came out of their houses for fighting for India's Independence. This shows that he is selective in his description of the people to show only the subjugation and decay that the people suffered from. It should also be noted that Naipaul's travel narratives on India as such do not give sufficient space for women representations.

According to Naipaul, humanity has undergone a lot of change in the present. He comments about this retreat from the past that had happened to Indian civilization thus:

A retreat from civilization and creativity, from rebirth and growth, to magic and incantation, a retrogression to an almost African night, the enduring primitivism of a place like the Congo, where, even after the slave-trading Arabs and the Belgians. . . . It is the death of a civilization, the final corruption of Hinduism. (Naipaul, 1977, 33)

As observed from this comment, Indian civilization is slowly moving back to its yoke stage. This stage creates ignorance and indifference in the attitude of the indigenous people towards the need for social progress. Political, economic and racial crisis is documented in the narrative as the reason for India's underdevelopment. Contact between individuals is less with the intervention of religious belief and caste system. This has led each community to become self dependent and to move away from the 'other'. The chaos that India suffered from is seen from the narrative as further contributed by many factors including social and political issues. This supports the observation that 'culture' has deeper relations with the individual and collective identity that the citizens of a particular civilization share. Naipaul emphasizes this, when he talks about the social conditions of India:

In 1974, India had appeared to stall, with civil disobedience campaigns, strikes, and student disturbances. The political issues were real, but they obscured the bigger crisis. The corruption of which the opposition spoke and indiscipline of which the rulers spoke were both aspects of a moral chaos, and this could be traced back to the beginning, to Independence. (Naipaul, 1977, 35)

As evidently seen through the observation mentioned above, it could be inferred that India disintegrated socially and politically. Naipaul can be seen as mixing and messing up the individual behaviour and mannerisms of the citizens of India with the overall identity that Indians share. Naipaul mentions the identity that a journalist in India experienced thus:

Indian was a word that was now without a meaning. He himself no longer knew what he was: he no longer knew the Hindu god He was like a tourist: he saw only an architectural monument. He had lost the key to a whole world of belief and feelings, and was cut off from his past. (Naipaul, 1977, 59-60)

Through the representation of the attitude of a small section of people, it seems Naipaul is misrepresenting the Indian civilization as a whole. This is purely a Western attitude that the writer had. Billie Melman, remarks in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* thus: "Real orientals are denied humanity, history and the authority to speak about and represent themselves, an authority which Orientalist travel writing reserves for occidentals." (Melman, 2002, 107) 'Denied humanity' could be seen from the documentation of Naipaul about Indians. Indians do not 'represent themselves' in Naipaul's narratives, but are represented according to the writer's intentions. Naipaul speaks about the 'Indian identity', thus: "Identity was related to a set of beliefs and rituals, knowledge of the gods, a code, an entire civilization. The loss of the past meant the loss therefore, to a nationalist-minded man, of a motive for action." (Naipaul, 1977, 60-61) The knowledge of the country, of writer, changes the identity of the citizen. This

shows that identity is related to culture as the individual has an individual and collective identity of which he/she is a part. What Indians lacked in the present context of the narrative is the sense of 'collective identity' of being part of the Indian civilization. Most of the Indians are presented by Naipaul as unaware of the historical past of India. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, disagrees at this point in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* and remarks:

In *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul's chief concern was the lack of proper historical awareness. He insistently attributes this intellectual depletion to centuries of conquest . . . for Naipaul conquest's chief achievement is to distort historical consciousness. European colonialism had at least this redeeming feature: it began to impart an inchoate sense of Indians to India's own inadequacies, but it produced no intellectual movement that could allow India to transcend those inadequacies. (Panwar., 2003, 45)

This thesis of Naipaul that India lost her historical consciousness cannot be accepted. Naipaul is not aware of the scholarship in the states like Maharashtra and Bengal, where there were great scholars who had undertaken the task of historical studies. It was the Indian scholars who brought out books and articles on the ancient history as well as the history of the monuments. He comments:

Just as the fantasy of past splendor is accommodated within an acceptance of present squalor. That once glorious avenue-not a national monument still permitted to live is a slum. (Naipaul, 1977, 5)

It is not true. The work of preserving the monument could be undertaken only after independence and it went on slowly because of other priorities. Excavating and preserving the destroyed monuments in India is seen as mere 'fantasy' by Naipaul. He does not go deeper into the analysis of the past grandeur that India was, which was conquered and destroyed by the Europeans. He is brooding on the graveyard of the

country without contemplating on the once living glory. This makes the readers think whether Naipaul is really sensitive about India. Is the writer digging the grave yard of his own cultural ancestry through his travel narratives? Is he going for a self congratulation of Trinidadian background showing the moral decay of India? Is he constructing a new India which is unknown to the Indians who live in the country? These are the questions to which I tried to find answer through the analysis of Naipaul's travel narratives. India does stand as a mark of the disillusionment that Naipaul felt with the country during his travels. Manjit Inder Singh, in *V. S. Naipaul*, comments on the representation of the destroyed monuments in Naipaul's travel narratives:

The ruin, the dereliction and the ravaged 'monuments' of relatively unaccounted and unregistered historical happenings become for Naipaul a way to pattern and connect the human burdens of memory and cultural fractures. It further explores ironically the futility of the whole journey in history, its dramatic encounters between the colonizer and the colonized resulting in tragic endings, born out of inherent flaws of non-communication. (Singh, 1998, 120)

Naipaul's observation of the 'cultural fracture' that occurred to India is represented through the images of the destroyed 'monuments' of Vijayanagara empire. They are presented by him as a burden for human memory. The reason for the cause of long years of destruction that India suffered, does not gain importance in Naipaul's travel enquiry. This is a deliberate omission by him in his travel narrative. He could be seen brooding more on the decay of Indian civilization in his narration than on the destruction India suffered. He remarks: "life goes on, the past continues. After conquest and destruction, the past simply reasserts itself." (Naipaul, 1977, 5) The casualness with which Naipaul describes the cultural history of India does not do justice to the real condition of the civilization.

After the presentation of the physical depletion that India suffered from the Europeans, Naipaul is focusing on the intellectual depletion of the Indians. This was presented by him as a major reason for the decay of the civilization. He mentions: "the crisis of India is not only political or economic. The larger crisis is of a wounded old civilization that has at last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead." (Naipaul, 1977, 8) This is another mode of branding the Indians as intellectually poor and constructing a new negative identity for Indians. This comment provides a negative identity for Indians in the minds of the readers who have not been to India even once.

Naipaul is providing a negative representation about the Indian politics through his travel narratives on the backdrop of the mutinies that India suffered. He feels that the Gandhian principles were completely misunderstood by the people. He comments thus:

Gandhian non-violence has degenerated into something very like the opposite of what Gandhi intended, it is non-doing, noninterference, and social indifference. It merges with the ideal of self-realization, truth to one's own identity. the acceptance of Karma, the Hindu killer, the Hindu calm, which tells us that we pay in this life for what we have done in past lives, so that everything we see is just and balanced, and the distress we see is to be relished as religious theatre, a reminder of our duty to ourselves, our future lives. (Naipaul, 1977, 15)

Naipaul generalizes on the basis on the fictional character like Jagan in R. K Narayan's novel. He arrogates himself as know-all of the Gandhian principle of non-violence. He does not take into account the civil-disobedience and Satyagraha, which were the direct non-violent means to fight oppression, which are still being used by the social activists in India. Naipaul is fond of generalizing on the basis of scant observations of the Indian masses, the real India.

It seems that fragmented notions that Naipaul had about India's colonial past and the misinterpretation of the mutinies that Indians had suffered were the major drawback in his narratives. He is presenting an entirely different picture of non-violence in the present Indian context as 'non-doing', 'noninterference' and 'social indifference'. 'Karma' or the moral obligation of the people is also misrepresented in the narrative as the 'Hindu Killer'. The real value of *ahimsa* is casually forgotten by the writer while viewing it in the context of 'cultural decay'. Gandhian ideologies are presented by Naipaul as misleading the Indians to 'non-interference' or 'indifference' to social development. Here, 'cultural decay' is deliberately imputed to the Indians by Naipaul through the quietism of Srinivas, which is:

In fact a form of self-cherishing in the midst of a general distress. It is parasitic. It depends on the continuing activity of others, the trains running, the presses printing, the rupees arriving from somewhere. It needs the world, but it surrenders the organization of the world to others. It is a religious response to worldly defeat. (Naipaul, 1977, 15)

Indian culture is misinterpreted by Naipaul through the description of one individual's wrong notion about Karma, which is presented here by Naipaul as 'parasitic' and he generalizes on it as a response of India's 'defeat' by the external world. India is provided with a new negative identity through the representation of Indian ideologies. The failure of Gandhian ideas to provide an identity for the Indians is seen as a major factor that has affected Indian culture as he narrates:

If he had projected on to India another code of survival, he might have left Independent India with an ideology, and perhaps even with what in India would have been truly revolutionary, the continental racial sense, the sense of belonging to a people specifically of India, which would have answered all his political aims, and more: not only weakening untouchability and submerging caste, but also

awakening the individual, enabling men to stand alone within a broader identity, establishing a new idea of human excellence. (Naipaul, 1977, 160)

What India lacked was the 'broader identity' and the 'racial sense' according to Naipaul. What the Indians lost was a sense of togetherness. He comments on it thus:

The racial sense is alien to Indians. Race is something they detect about others, but among themselves they know only the sub caste or caste, the clan, the language group. Beyond that they cannot go: they do not see themselves as belonging to an Indian race: the words have no meaning. Historically, this absence of cohesiveness has been the calamity of India. (Naipaul, 1977, 141)

As it has been amply evidenced from this comment, it could be seen that Indian culture lacked collective consciousness or the feeling of belonging to one race. Indians are so obsessed with their caste and religious system that the feeling of being a single race was slowly wiped away from their culture. A common shared set of ideology is what the country lacked. Naipaul is trying through his narrative to make the people aware of their lacking of belonging to one race. Thinking of his intention in a positive sense, and the readers expected to read his narratives are Indians, he could mean that India could progress in future. This narration is obviously addressed to the Indians. The reformation that the writer aims in the society could be seen in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, where he remarks:

You had two battles: one to cleanse the country of foreign rule and the other to cleanse oneself. One looked outward: the other inward. I see no reason why the two cannot be combined. If this is not done then ten years later people will say: "Why did not you tell us? Look at the mess we are in now? (Panwar, 2003, 60)

The overall view that Naipaul presented through his travel narrative about India, was as follows:

All that remained was what the visitor could see: small, poor fields, ragged men, huts, monsoon mud. But in that very abjectness lay security where the world had shrunk, and ideas of human possibility had become extinct, the world could be seen as complete. Men had retreated to their last, impregnable defenses: their knowledge of who they were, their caste, their karma, their unshakable place in the scheme of things, and this knowledge was like their knowledge of the seasons. Ritual marked the passage of each day, ritual marked every stage of a man's life. Life itself had been turned to ritual: and everything beyond this complete and sanctified world-where fulfillment came so easily to a man or to a woman- was vain and phantasmal. (Naipaul, 1977, 32)

This remark of Naipaul presents his impression of the decay and retreat of Indian civilization. This had created a negative identity of the civilization and had invited much criticism even of his admirers. If Indians try to become aware of who they were, it is not at all wrong. His generalization that the Indians do nothing as they take a retreat to their 'karma' is a patently false generalization. Had it been so, there would not have been uprising and rebellions 1857 onwards. India needed one concerted effort and viable program, which Gandhiji provided and they did act on it. Purabi Panwar comments on the hostility and criticism that Naipaul had to face after publishing his Indian travel narratives in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* was:

Before, during and after his many journeys Naipaul has made both overt and covert observations on nations, cultures, communities and races, which have forced world-wide attention. His book testifies to his powers as a

shrewd delineator of people, situations and settings, and reflects his unusual talent for 'the telling detail and the penetrating observation based on it. But they also carry these notations of experiences and encounters, inextricably mixed up with his innate predilections and prejudices. Naipaul has, as a result, roused not only much controversy and provocation but bitter hostility and resentment too. All along his writing career till date, he has drawn a formidable envy of admirers and detractors, of those who hugely eulogize him and those who treat him as a contraband item. (Panwar, 2003, 13-14)

Naipaul does not take into account the prosperity that India had before it was conquered and subjugated. According to him, nation building becomes a difficult task in this context of cultural decay. In support of his theme of cultural decay in India, he quotes an Indian Prince of a small state somewhere in Rajasthan who narrates:

Took away everything. Honor, titles, all looted. I'm not a patriot, but not inhuman, as you say. . .you people must leave us alone. You mustn't come and tell us we're subhuman. We're civilized. Are they happy where you come from? Are they happy in England? (Naipaul, 1977, 24)

This complaint of the Prince cannot be the example of cultural decay in India. Naipaul should have talked to the Indian scholars and freedom fighters, not some obscure ex-prince.

Colonization could be seen to a larger extent as one of the reasons for the cultural decay that affected India. The opinions of the citizens of India are highlighted by Naipaul contradicting what he himself is depicting about the country's cultural and intellectual decay. Bruce King, comments in *Modern Novelists: V. S. Naipaul* thus:

He can be seen as having projected much of his personal experience on his analysis of the contemporary world: yet while unique his experience is representative of the major social, psychological, political and cultural changes of our time. His views often have the effect of paradox and surprise forcing a re-examination of received opinions. (King, 1993, 2)

Bruce King's comment shows that Naipaul's opinions and observations on India have to be re-examined by the readers before admitting his views on an identity of India and its people. This is because he is unable to position himself within the Indian and Trinidadian identity. Naipaul comments about the social decay of India thus:

Now of Gandhianism there remained only the emblems and the energy: and the energy had turned malignant. India needed a 'new' code, but it had none. There were no longer any rules: and India-so often invaded, conquered, plundered, with a quarter of its population always in the serfdom of untouchability, people without a country, only with master-was discovering again that it was cruel and horribly violent. (Naipaul, 1977, 36)

India can be seen as presented by the writer as 'cruel' and 'horribly violent'. This provides a negative identity to the country during the period of political turmoil. Naipaul substantiates this identity construction through the second person narrator, an opposition leader named Jai Prakash Narayan, who comments:

It is now the existence of disputes and quarrels that so much endangers the integrity of the nation as the manner in which we conduct them. We often behave like animals, be it a village feud, a student's organization, a labour dispute, a religious procession, a boundary disagreement, or a major political question, we are more likely than not

to become aggressive, wild, and violent. We kill and burn and loot and sometimes commit even worse crimes.
(Naipaul, 1977, 36-37)

The political crisis of India need not necessarily make the people 'animal' as seen from the quotation above. Jaiprakah Narayan in the quotation above is criticizing a section of people who turn violent during the agitation for one cause or the other. But Naipaul appears to generalize it. Naipaul holds caste system responsible for the unrest and agitations, but he forgets to note the steps taken by the Indian government and social activists to fight social inequality generated by the caste system. There is a school of Harijan girls, and Naipaul's Brahmin guide explains, "Backward class, Backward class" (Naipaul, 1977, 37) converting the girls into distant object of awe. The antique violence remained: "Rural untouchability as serfdom, maintained by terror and sometimes by deliberate starvation. None of this was new: but suddenly in India it was news". (Naipaul, 1977, 37-38) Naipaul does not stand by to interrogate or interpret. He merely presents. And what is presented could lead us to suspect the quality of travel narratives. They are genuine, no doubt, but are documents of doubt and prejudice. Cultural decay presented in the form of blind religious fanaticism is seen as overpowering the travel narrative on India. According to Naipaul, social unrest wiped out the remnants of old culture. Even though Indians try for a retreat to its old cultural system, it is not possible according to him. He remarks:

Men cannot easily unlearn new modes of feeling. Retreat is no longer possible. Even the ashrams and the holy men (with their executive jets, their international followings, and their public-relations men) are no longer what they were. (Naipaul, 1977, 41)

This comment highlights that the Indian culture is under slow transformation by copying the West. Naipaul feels that the changes that had happened to Indian culture purports "parody: and sometimes unconscious mimicry." The use of the term 'unconscious mimicry' stresses the modern culture of Indians influenced by the West. The disintegration of the Hindu culture is represented by Naipaul through his travel

narratives. The most awful form of beggary was seen in Bombay as he was able to experience it closely and comment on it:

The beggars themselves, forgetting their Hindu function, also pester tourists: and the tourists misinterpret the whole business, seeing in the beggary of the few beggars of all. Beggars have become a nuisance and a disgrace. By becoming numerous they have lost their place in the Hindu system and have no claim on anyone. (Naipaul, 1977, 48)

Naipaul as a traveller hates the beggary that he saw in India as the beggars 'pester tourists'. Through his narrative, he documents the beggary of an individual as the 'beggary of all' the people. He brands beggars as a 'nuisance' and 'disgrace'. Dileep Padgoankar, comments in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, about the misrepresentation of India by Naipaul:

The very titles of his first two books on India *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*- made it clear that he regarded this country as yet another, indeed extravagant, example of decay and decomposition, inertia, violence, fear and generally of intellectual puerility and relentless, moral turpitude. His was a stark vision: one which lacked the flimsiest hope of progress or redemption. (Panwar, 2003, 54-55)

The 'stark vision' of Naipaul could be seen in the identity that he creates for the whole Indian civilization by showing the deeds of a single individual. Indian land and byways could be seen as portrayed dirty with human excreta and the Indian attitudes were also described as dirty with the hatred for the fellow beings of low caste. The human habit of defecating in the public places is highlighted by the writer in the first travelogue on India *An Area of Darkness*. This shows that Naipaul was much conscious of an individual's public and private space. The notion of 'public' and 'private' space in Naipaul's narrative might be due to the Western influence that he had. He remarks:

Through these sections we walked without speaking, picking our way between squirts and butts and twists of human excrement. It was unclean to clean, it was unclean even to notice. It was the business of the sweepers to remove excrement, and until the sweepers came, people were content to live in the midst of their own excrement. (Naipaul, 1977, 49)

The awareness of 'public' and 'private' space made the writer to be conscious about Indian premises. He severely criticizes the total neglect of the people towards the cleanliness of their premises. He expresses his disgust, even to look, at the streets is seen in the words 'It was unclean to clean; it was unclean even to notice'. He expresses his disgust saying 'we walked without speaking'. This comment shows the impact of his Trinidadian culture in his behaviour. Even though changes have happened in the living conditions of India, Naipaul does not appear to have focused on them, as Purabi Panwar, comments in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*:

Naipaul's characteristic tendency is to pick out selective details, and wrap them up with over-generalization and over-statements. In India, for instance, people do defecate in public, beside railway tracks, on beaches and river banks, on fields and streets. But Naipaul implies as if the whole of India defecates publicly. He distorts things when he attributes it to the 'claustrophobia' of Indians in general, an absolutely untrue and unfounded gloss. (Panwar, 2003, 17)

As it appears from this remark, seems to have preconceived notions about India and he tries to find details or interpret things to suit his purpose. Fakrul Alam, critic on Naipaul, in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, strongly opposes such generalized statements of Naipaul. He explains:

Books such as *India: A Wounded Civilization*, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* and *Beyond Belief* all show flashes of brilliance and reveal a master of narrative and shrewd delineator of people and setting, but these are gifts of the writer of fiction. In his travel writing and exposes of India and Islam Naipaul constantly over states, over generalizes and quite often misrepresents and even distorts what he comes across. (Panwar, 2003, 192)

This comment highlights the idea that, Naipaul might have misrepresented the behavior patterns of the Indians which has resulted into making his narrative more a fiction than a representation of reality. This is the point where the objective of writing serious travel narrative often fails in Naipaul. He had to be conscious of the fact that an individual's own set of behaviour need not be the same behaviour pattern of the whole civilization. It should be seen as purely individual and personal. The defecation of one individual in a public place need not reflect as the habit of the whole civilization as Naipaul has depicted. This "absence of civic sense" (Naipaul, 1977, 55) as mentioned in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, is not necessarily the common behavior of the Indians. The defecation in public space can be seen as a routine activity that people do without thinking anything serious about it. Intentional or unintentional unawareness of the past is interpreted as cultural decay and loss of collective identity of the civilization. This is the source of the wound that India suffered according to Naipaul in his narrative. He says:

India remains so little known to Indians. People just don't have the information. History and social inquiry, and the habits of analysis that go with these disciplines, are too far outside the Indian tradition." (Naipaul, 1977, 192)

He appears to say that the Indians lack the social and political inquiry into the country's cultural past. This could be seen as the reason for the country's diminutive growth. Colonization has given a platform for India and its citizens to contemplate on the country's position in the world. Hence the notion of a new cultural consciousness

arose in the country after the political chaos. This could not be completely neglected even though Naipaul's narrative contradicts this notion. The shaping of Indian culture according to Naipaul's travel narrative was thus:

and clan are more than brotherhoods; they define the individual completely. The individual is never on his own: he is always fundamentally a member of his group, with a complex apparatus of rules, rituals, taboos. (Naipaul, 1977, 90)

Here he says, Indian culture does not provide individual identity to the people. People are divided into groups sharing a collective identity through rituals and rules of the civilization. The behaviour of every individual is according to the will of their group. Indian culture was formulated by the roles that each individual performed. Naipaul further says:

Every detail of behaviour is regulated-the bowels to be cleared before breakfast and never after, for instance, the left hand and not the right to be used for intimate sexual contact, and so on. Relationships are codified. And religion and religious practices- 'magic and animistic ways of thinking'-lock everything into place. (Naipaul, 1977, 103)

These regulations formed the frame work of the Indian social behavior rather than culture. Naipaul calls this blind religious belief of the Indians in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* thus: "Religion, faith: there seemed to be no end to it, no end to its demands. It was like part of the nerves of the overpopulated, over-protected valley."(Naipaul, 1990, 510) This comment emphasizes that rules and regulations codify the society and the culture of India. There is no existence for the individual outside this framework. Indian culture could be seen as a series of caste codes based on which every Indian is obliged to work. Naipaul writes:

Caste pollutions, more permanently wounding, and a greater cause for hysteria, than any beating up. Black is a

colour horrible to the Indo-Aryan: the moustache is an important caste emblem, and untouchables can be killed for wearing their moustaches curling up rather than drooping down: shoes are made of leather and tread the polluted earth. (Naipaul, 1977, 103)

Caste codes are seen by Naipaul as providing the framework for Indian culture. Naipaul tries to show how there is the feeling of idealization or purposelessness in the Indian life. In this respect he quotes Nirad Chaudhari who suggests a remedial measure. It was to commit suicide. Nirad Chaudhari says:

Do we live at all? This would seem an absurd question, for none of us commit suicide, though to be honest. I would confess that I have come to feel that a large majority of the persons I know should do so, because I cannot see any point in their remaining alive. (Naipaul, 1977, 126)

Naipaul's quote of Chaudhari is a kind of demotivation for all the Indians who are striving hard to live their life under challenging circumstances through the events like Emergency. This pessimistic comment does not mean to say that he does not see a future for the Indians. The only way out of this cultural chaos is the awareness that could be generated among the people. India has its own distinct culture, art, rulers and legislature from the past. But this past has to be awakened in the mind of the present generation, only then India could step forward to its development. 'Cultural chaos' could only be nullified through 'cultural awareness'. Naipaul tries to impart this vision in his travelogue for progress of the Indian civilization:

Through all this-empires, achievement, chaos, conquest, plunder, the steady loss of Indian territory to the world of Islam-India is said to have kept her soul, to have preserved the democratic ways of her village republics, her 'people's government'. Democracy hasn't come to India from an alien source: India has had it all along. To rediscover

democracy, India has only to rediscover herself. (Naipaul, 1977, 131)

Indian heritage and culture could hence be seen as lost with the passage of time, during the long years of war and conquest, which have to be rediscovered now. The social and political crisis that India suffered from, is due to the cultural confusion that Indians are facing in the present. Naipaul remarks thus:

Archaic emotions,' 'nostalgic memories': when these were awakened by Gandhi, India became free. But the India created in this way had to stall. Gandhi took India out of one kind of *Kal Yug*, one kind of Black age: his success inevitably pushed it back into another. (Naipaul, 1977, 138-139)

Naipaul here characterizes post-independent India as another *Kal Yug*. He appears to think nothing of India's march towards progress through her five-year plans, green revolutions, activities, of welfare of state, education etc. He appears to be totally unaware of resurgent Indian economy, the growing self-awareness among people. Naipaul's presentation of India in his travel narratives is as a land of diverse beliefs and customs. Religious beliefs of the people are emphasized in his travel narratives. According to him a life without religious beliefs would make the people feel lost. Every object that he saw in India was interpreted by him in his own preconception of India. They were charged with the blind beliefs of the people. Naipaul gives an example of the religious belief in Bengal:

The truth is frightening, as I learned only recently near the end of the book. The pumpkin, in Bengal and adjoining areas, is a vegetable substitute for a living sacrifice: the male hand was therefore necessary. (Naipaul, 1977, XII)

In the present book religious beliefs of the Indians are a theme that the writer is obsessed with throughout his travel narratives. It is seen by Naipaul as a hindrance to the progress of Indian culture as he was unable to find any significance for these

beliefs. He says: "the memories of that India, which lived on into my childhood in Trinidad, are like trapdoors into a bottomless past." (Naipaul, 1977, XII) The imagery that the writer employs while referring to the religious beliefs of the Indians as 'trapdoors' that lead to 'bottomless past' indirectly conveys to the readers the discontent that Naipaul had with the blind beliefs. Naipaul's opinions on India were based on the way in which he perceived Indian culture.

The whole atmosphere prevailing in the narrative is that of disillusionment and discontent due to the 'culture shock' that he experienced due to his conflicting identities. He could be seen as leading the readers to view only those aspects that he felt had created 'cultural decay' in India. He does not appear to understand the point of view of the people of India. He presents India from his own personal point of view of a westernized Indian and thinks of India as a land of 'cultural decay'. His narrative appears to lack objectivity because his own Indian family origin and his western upbringing forbids him to take any objective point of view.

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