

# V.S.NAIPAUL'S COMMENT ON INDIAN NATIONALISM

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### **ABSTRACT:**

V.S. Naipaul stands supreme in the literary horizon. He depicts the real and naked image of India through his three famous travel narratives; 'India: A Wounded Civilization', 'An Area of Darkness' and 'India: A Million Mutinies now'. This paper aims to present his nationalistic vision on India. An attempt has been made to look into the Polemical angles of his idea of India and Indian nationalism. This paper studies how Indian nationalism and its relevance in current historic and Socio-Political scenario and how it is loaded with material implications. In broader sense, Nationalism is an idea that nurtures the requirements of a certain nation with the intention of attaining and sustaining the nation's sovereignty that means self-governance over its mother land. It is an inclusion of all the people of India despite their diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. This paper makes an attempt to present the idea of Indian nationalism as the result of ideological stand of the author. This depicts the Cultural nationalism of India through the ideology of V.S. Naipaul.

**Key words:** *India, Ideology, Inclusion, Society, Culture, Cultural Nationalism*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

India: A wounded Civilization (1977) in Naipaul's second travelogue about India. He wrote this book after his third visit to India. The non-fiction Portrays has more close eye for India than his first travelogue An Area of Darkness (1964). Naipaul doesn't reiterate that he's an Indian, yet he shows his sincere concerns for India by writing about its wounds and darkness and suggesting a new light through a healing touch. He says about his relationship with India in the forward of his book that "[i]t isn't my home, and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it; I can't travel only for fights. I am at once too close and too far (x)". As this indicates, he finds Indian Civilization wounded by centuries of outsiders rule. He says that until now it has not developed any vision to regenerate or revive itself.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The research incorporates several sources to analyse the texts and contexts of Naipaul's selected works. The research is both intensive and extensive form. The researcher has to collect information from the primary and secondary sources. Most of the information has to be drawn from secondary sources like critics like Homi Bhaba, Edward Said, R.K. Dhawan, Julia Kristeva, Minakshi Mukerjee.

Other secondary sources like books of authoritarian critics on Naipaul have been integrated for analysing Naipaul's selected works and travel writings. Going through the books, book reviews, journals, conference papers, some interviews and internet has become very useful when views and opinions of writers are understood in the critical paradigms.

## **NAIPAUL'S COMMENT ON NATIONALISM:**

Naipaul's Ideological stand about India is clearer and more candid now. He distinguishes his thoughts into three parts; his analysis of India as a wounded civilization, the new claim on the land by the Hindu nationalists i.e. Shiv Sena, Jan Sangh; to build the nation by the ideologically hallow political leaders. Naipaul regards Hindu nationalism as only viable recipe for the further existence of Indian Culture, Civilization and life.

In its first chapter, "An old equilibrium" (3-26), Naipaul sees Indian Civilization as an eternal and ancient one. He tells that "[1] life goes on, the Past Continues. After conquest and destruction, the past simply reasserts itself" (5). He adds that "India, Hindu India, is eternal: Conquests and defilements are but Instants in time (4)". He depicts the Hindu Kingdom of Vijayanagar as the reassertion of past. Visualizing and glorifying the role of a local Hindu Prince, he tells that he was defeated by the Muslims and taken to Delhi, and then they forcefully converted him as a Muslim and the converted Prince struggled & reestablished his freedom and declared him Hindu again. Thus, Naipaul states, "the great Hindu Kingdom of the south was founded" (6). He reveals in this way his Hinduism stand in the very first chapter.

Naipaul states that during the subjection to British, India never lost its glory and peculiar character. But the actual issue started after Independence. "There always was a contradiction between the archaism of national pride and the promise of the new; contradiction has at last cacked the civilization open" (8). He targets Nehru's decision making and adoption of such policies after the independence in India which was responsible for its self destruction. He depicts that "[t]he turbulence in India this time has not come from foreign invasion as conquest; it has been generated from within" (8). The Indian problem, according to him, is not only Political or economic, but it is also of a "wounded civilization" where the civilization is not aware of its values, beliefs and morale.

Naipaul's impulse does not give much gap to other religions in his discourse; he finds Hinduism as the natural religion of India. Naipaul advocates that of the time of arrival of East India Company in seventeenth century, "Madras was find of a religion that had long been Pacified, where he finds more Hindus and less Islamic people. (Muslims)

He rejects the principles and philosophy of both Gandhi and Nehru by means of an attack on R.K. Narayan's writings. Mentioning Narayan's idea that "India will go on", that his conviction in 1961, after fourteen years of Independence, India will go on during huge uncertainties after Nehru. He targets at Gandhi's theory of Non-violence by citing the case of Srinivas, one of the characters of Narayan: "In His next chapter, "The Shattering world" (27-44), advocates regarding the political uncertainties of 1961, the Emergency declared by the former Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1975 and the political scenarios after independence that have shattered the Indian life, according to Naipaul. He rejected the freedom movements led by Mahatma Gandhis, which according to him focussed more on truth than the freedom. The Political scenario of pre-Independence and post-Independence perished the Indian Civilization and led to "the final corruption of Hinduism" (33).

A heavily complex relax about its shape and growth, Indian nationalism is a field that has numerous scholars, and any debate of it must take into account the remarks and thoughts of other scholars and thinkers on this particular topic. In the efforts to articulate nationalism for India, Naipaul participate in a discussion or debate enriched by some potential thinkers like Gandhi and Nehru. Naipaul establishes a curious portrait with the early architects of Indian nationalism, who struggled with the disturbing politics of class, of race, of the religious divide within race (between Hindu and Muslim) and of the caste Struggle with religion.

As a Hindu descendant who emigrated from India, Naipaul represents the intricate relationship with the country of his ancestors. Naipaul wishes that India comprehends its past and progress towards its future. It is valueless to waste time on repenting on the past instead of the country should strive forward to build a glorious future.

Nationalism is regarded as a western concept, despite the difference about Indian national identity, Naipaul view Nehru as the competent builder of India because Nehruvian nationalism portrays a modern India modelled after western nations; It should appear as no surprise that they refuse what is known as Gandhi's glorification of "holy poverty" or his "anti-modernity".

Ronald Inden's "Orientalist Constructions of India" enables to unravel some of the Complex issues binding caste in Indian Society and Naipaul's attack on it his first two books, *An Area of Darkness* (1964) and *India: A wounded civilization* (1977).

There is a clear contrast between the two "discoveries" of India. For Nehru, India is a great nation with a rich cultural heritage marked by unity in diversity. According to Naipaul, "India is the poorest country in the world" (41) and he is attempting to reveal the gloomy sociocultural and political reality of Indians' lives.

Depicting the poverty in India, Naipaul States that it is a natural feature of India, the victims are made to accept it as the result of their actions in previous life. He narrates that "Nehru had once observed that a danger in India was that poverty might be deified. Gandhianism had had that effect". According to Naipaul it was only Indira Gandhi who raised the poverty matter as a national issue in 1971. The main slogan of her was "Garibi Hatao" (Remove Poverty).

At third tier poverty was an flustering political concern that defamed the government. India was placed in top rank in poverty in the global map. When Mrs. Gandhi introduced "Garibi Hatao", meanwhile her contenders countered it with "Indira Hatao" slogan.

Naipaul reviewed that the govt. during the emergency span remarkable reforms: It revoked various types of rural debts, illegal moneylenders were arrested and twenty eight years after the Independent India the bonded labour custom was ethically set free. Hence, according to him, "[t] the old equilibrium had gone and at the moment all was chaos. But out of this, out of the crumbling of the old Hindu system, and the spirit of rejection, India was learning new ways of seeing and feelings"(38). Naipaul then regards Emergency as a watershed in the history of India.

Naipaul has observed the complexity of crisis of the forms of governments and the nation was not one country, but it had hundreds of small nations which are equal to unity in diversity. This Indianness keeps the country united not by economic conditions but by the means of love and affection. The upliftment which he had invested not yet begun to show. The land inside India has to be viewed by its own standards. Naipaul represents that Indianness has to be experienced in the Indian way. Naipaul says that Indianness is eternal and forever regains consciousness. Indianness would somehow look like individualistic and it should be free from all responsibilities

He observes that the people of Rajasthan are self-possessed and believe themselves as just peasants. They have always been content with fields, water, crops and cattle which is the starting and ending of their way of living life. They've never focusses towards foods and sustainable aspect which are fantasies in any Indian village. The Indian nationalism in the world has shrunk, and the human possibility has diminished. The people have retreated their wisdom of which they are their caste, karma and their unshakable place in the scheme of things.

The change in climatic condition and its result on Naipaul's last trip to India has disillusioned him greatly about the development and so-called growth and progress; but the development of human greed and socio-spiritual regression. The taste of wealth has not fulfilled its hunger, but has made it greedy and wanting more and more. Religion, Culture and tradition may still be alive but the motto behind those rituals, the culture of spirituality is fast declining. The trip finally tells him to look into the past and present status of his own land, India is not in a suitable condition. Naipaul viewed the country as courting ruin in trying a half way sort of civilization, one with a western coating covering a core of Third World disorder. The Nationalism he represented was one that an Indian would recognize as his own, but reviewed with a sensibility further towards India's ambitions at the time that India itself could attain. Naipaul has documented the socio-religions complexity of a nation whose mythic attraction to a generation of hippies and soul seekers masked the dysfunctions of an ancient civilization unable to take its people in the modern age.

Naipaul's classification of Indians, Naipaul highlights the repetitions of representations of Indians "from the time immemorial". However, he does not subvert the tendency to generalize; rather he indulges it in himself. In fact, he views the need to "appreciate" such traits in order to understand the country and its people.

In the chapter "The Skyscrapers and the Chawls" (47-61), Naipaul views Bombay as a city plotted for superior class people which nonetheless has no ways to sustain for the poor. He states that due to the notable wide gap between the rich and poor and escalating the political plight, Hinduism has lost its stand and position in India. He opines that the Hindus are in such a state where their socio-economic and religious conditions is in threat. Meanwhile he finds the establishment and growth of Shiv Sena in Bombay as the voice of Hindu under the dynamic leadership of fire brand Hindu leader Bala Saheb Thackrey as a significant development.

"Out of the crumbling Hindu system, they have evolved what is in effect a new religion, and they have declared themselves affiliated to an army, the Shiv Sena, the army of Shiva. Not Shiv the God, but Shivaji the seventeenth century Maratha guerilla leader, who challenged the Mughal empire and made the Marathas, the people of the Bombay region, a power in India for a century" (51)

In this context, Naipaul tries to understand about Shiv Sena. Shivaji is the idol of Shiv Sena. Shiv Sena members assert their right over the region, culture, tradition, life and politics as the dignitary sons of the soil. Establishment of Hinduism was their central motto. Naipaul remarked that "(t)he Sena 'army' is xenophobic. It says that Maharashtra, the land of Marathas is for Marathians. It has won concession from the government that eighty percent of jobs shall be held by Maharashtrians" (52). Naipaul linked the nature of Shiv Sena with the 'fascist' and related to Hitler but defending Sena he writes "this in an easy, imported world. The Shiv Sena has its own Indian antecedents.... It is a great contracting out, not from India, but from a Hindu system" (52). Reviewing Sena's nature and ideology he writes: "for the Sena man and the people they led, the world was new; they saw themselves at the beginning of things; unaccommodated men making claim on their land for the first time, out of chaos evolving their own philosophy of Community and Self-help (61)".

Hence, he suggests that the Sena obtains a new idea on India which has been formed out of an old civilization.

In another part, Naipaul rejects the doctrine of Naxalism, which he represents as an intellectual ruin, a mishap of ignorance, idealism and mimicry; Middle class India, after the Gandhian bedlam, incapable of leading ideas and institutions of its own, calling for all the time in the modern world to be inducted into the art, science and ideas of other civilizations, not always understanding the upshots, and this time borrowing something deadly, somebody else's idea of revolution" (82). However he neither looks into the causes behind the rise of the movement nor examines the reasons for its failure.

In the third part of the book Naipaul highlights that Gandhi and other leaders of the Indian National Congress were working without having the ideology. In the chapter "A Defect of Vision" (88-103), he launches an attack on Gandhi. He opines that Gandhi had no idea of the ways of the world, that he had no clear vision for the upcoming future. He remarks that "he was virtually uneducated, had never even read a newspaper - he passionately wanted to go to England. He began to be afraid that the cast might prevent his going; and, two months earlier than he had planned, he took a ship from Bombay to Southampton" (85). He adds [a]nd yet, curiously, it was again a wish for travel and adventure that two years later sent Gandhi to South Africa". He intended to be there for a year but stayed for twenty years "England has been unsettling only because it had not been India"(81). Naipaul even remarks that Indira Gandhi failed to remove poverty from India because it was considered holy (sacred) because of Gandhi's influence. However, as per the principles of Gandhi, the spinning of the wheel could never have poem wiped out poverty.

Naipaul's fellow writer Paul Theroux comments that he caused international outrage for supporting the Hindu Nationalists in India, and though married to a Muslim, he was accused inevitably of Islamophobia. In the context of lord Ram's birthplace of Ayodhya, he appreciates the activities of Shiv Sena and as a strong believer of Sena's ideology, he was attacked on an outrage of the Muslims. At some places, he shows his optimum favour for Hinduism which was critically opposed by the Islam followers.

Six months after the demolition of Babri Masjid, The Times of India's then editor Dileep Padgaonkar met V.S. Naipaul at his flat in London for an interview. His reply to a question about his reaction to the Babri Masjid's razing showed just how deeply his thinking had changed. He'd reacted "not as badly as the others". The Mughal ruler Baber, in his view, "had contempt for the country he had conquered and his building of that Mosque was an act of contempt for the country... The construction of a Mosque on a spot regarded as sacred by the conquered population was meant as an insult... an insult to an ancient idea, the idea of Ram". In the Kar Sevaks who climbed atop Babri's domes Naipaul saw "Passion" and in Hindu Nationalism a "new, historical awakening" and hope for national regeneration.

Though Naipaul made it clear later that history had to be finally "Left behind" and that it had to be written by those with "Independent minds", the Past-Babri label stuck. So much so that after Beyond Belief, the book on his travels to non-arab Muslim countries, was out in 1998, the more passionate among Indian "liberals" joined Zakaria in comparing him to V.D. Savarkar, who'd originally expanded the theory of Hindutva and MS Golwalker, ex- RSS chief and Sangh Parivar Icon.

This theory underlying the text, as also his description of Pakistan as little better than "a criminal enterprise", led to him being labelled a " Muslim baiter" in that country and similar accusations were made from within India when he yet again spoke of the "passion" he felt had animated the Kar Sevaks in Ayodhya.

In the new millennium he returned to India on more than one occasion and re-stated his position on Islam and Hinduism, eliciting strong reactions from the likes of Girish Karnad. And on his death, many remarked on Twitter that the new, emerging India had failed to bestow any real honour to Naipaul. The pot, evidently, remained stirred. [TOI]

## CONCLUSION:

The work covers the areas like history, autobiography, literature and politics. Post colonial travel writer like V.S. Naipaul have used the genre to subvert the colonial discourse by emphasizing on the effect of colonialism on the socio-cultural and political situations and explore the phenomenon of nationalism. His works on India reveal the civilizational aspects of individual nations with contemporary politics, government, economy, religion and culture. His observations on people, their lifestyle, habits, behaviours, ideologies, beliefs, customs, traditions, values, superstitions, social struct and especially Indian Nationalism shall be framed in different chapters.

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