

**Naipaul's *India: A Million Mutinies Now*:  
Reshaping the Migrant's Sensibility Revealed through his  
Diasporic Re-search in India**

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**Abstract**

*The third book of V.S. Naipaul's Indian travels, India: A Million Mutinies Now, is written with his earlier books on India in mind and is another revisal, another re-seeing of what had been wrongly judged in the past. Coming out of the cocoon of acute migrant sensibilities on his third visit to this country, Naipaul has changed his attitude and mindset to accept that life cannot be without changes. Actually, this travelogue is another chapter in the author's ongoing autobiographical story of coming to terms with his ancestral land of India. On his third visit to India, the author finds stability despite different sectarian and secessionist eruptions. India: A Million Mutinies Now can be regarded as a homecoming for Naipaul. Naipaul observes that the dark covers, holding beneath them centuries of violence, are being put aside. The patterns of dominance are being broken into pieces. He sees these mutinies as empowering symbols, and with their encircling the centre, the author prognosticates India on its way to being strong again. Though the time gap between the publication of An Area of Darkness and that of India: A Million Mutinies Now is twenty-seven years, both books are no doubt commentaries on each other and provide clear examples of the diasporic forces at work within the writer's migrant sensibilities of which the author is not well-aware. Therefore, the third book about India bears a special significance as Naipaul has written something he has neither thought of nor intended to write about in his earlier two books on India. The idea of "abjectness and defeat and shame" of his ancestors' indentured servitude in the Caribbean, which he had carried to India on his first trip in 1962, no doubt pushes him to a difficult position. But in India: A Million Mutinies Now, Naipaul can finally say that 27 years later, he has eradicated "the darkness" and shed his "old nerves" lying prostrate in his migrant sensibilities towards Indian history.*

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## Introduction

But all men live in constructs. Civilisation is a construct. And this construct is my own. Within it, I am of value, just as I am. I have to put nothing on. I exploit myself... (Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* 2002, 179).

The third book of V.S. Naipaul's Indian travels, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (first published in 1990), is written with his earlier books on India in mind and is another revisal, another re-seeing of what had been wrongly judged in the past. The present book contains the voices of a wide spectrum of people living in different parts of the country. These people are allowed to speak for themselves without much authorial commentary. In his earlier travels to India in 1962 and 1975, he looked for its tradition but found only decay and chaos. By his third visit to this country, Naipaul had changed his attitude and mindset to accept that life could not be without changes. By then, he was interested in how people strived to improve their lives in this country. "V.S. Naipaul is a literary traveller and, even in this interdisciplinary age, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* seems best regarded as a literary rather than political or sociological narrative" (Sabin 1993, 81). Actually, this travelogue is another chapter in the author's ongoing autobiographical story of coming to terms with his ancestral land of India. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is Naipaul's most voluminous travelogue on India. It considers people's ideas, attitudes and thoughts as reflected in his interviews with them. From a new vantage point of mature sanity, he overcomes his personal fantasies and fears experienced during earlier travels that arose from his family history of migrating as indentured labour to Trinidad in the nineteenth century. Naipaul presents himself as capable of approaching India less subjectively and with more peace of mind. The title of the book justifies the present time of India by mellowing its disruptive forces to the liberating spirit of the 1857 Mutiny. Quite naturally, in Naipaul's voice, it is heard "...the idea of freedom has gone everywhere in India" (Naipaul 1998, 517).

A migrant writer always uses 'travel' as an effective tool to search for the truths – truths behind his social, historical, and cultural roots. John Thieme in *Postcolonial Studies: The Essential Glossary* says, "Postcolonial theory has generally viewed travel in a different light, seeing it as an activity which, since it occurs in the *liminal* space between cultures, opens up possibilities for cultural interchange in an *ambivalent* environment" (Thieme 2003, 264). By putting massive interest in travel narratives as a separate genre, the postcolonial readers view the development of postcolonial studies with such recognition that "... *border* spaces are the locations where new cultural formations come into being" (ibid., 263). Homi K. Bhabha's focus on interstitial locations and migrant subjectivity, as revealed in his *Location of Culture* (Bhabha 1994), is nothing but a co-relative to the function of travel writing as a

discourse that puts the monocultural versions of identity to question. Therefore, travel narratives, with their axiomatic change in the role of narration in the postcolonial set-up, have inevitably challenged the older concepts of “home” and fixed positionality as something “stable and discrete” in reference to quite contemporary ideas like “borderland” places and transnational discourses (Said 1984, 226-247).

### **Naipaul's Diasporic Approach Towards India**

V.S. Naipaul is such a diasporic writer that wherever he travels in India, he is able to identify with the host culture and is inclined to use its standards and criteria for his assessments. If he fails to do so anywhere, his vision becomes blurred, as it happens in the case of his 1962 visit to India. Naipaul discovers that the world that his predecessors, Joseph Conrad and E.M. Forster, had explored is one he must enter again. But he must do it differently – as a colonial traveller and writing among the colonials, Naipaul realises that he should have a clear idea about his own colonial past; otherwise, it is for him to go nowhere. A migrant must have a clear idea about his or her roots first. And this realisation brings together the person and the writer. Naipaul's effort to explore his own past works behind the contemplation of his travels to India. His diasporic responses to India provoke a lot of adverse criticism from different quarters all over the world. It is a truth most significantly pointed out by Herald Leusmann:

Naipaul is a traveller, a cosmopolitan with a, historically speaking, universal philosophy, a specialist when it comes to describe societal changes and intolerance, chauvinism, fanaticism and religious fundamentalism, decline, defeat, failure, and disgrace, but also the minimum hope for the remnants of a culture's pride and self-respect. (Leusmann 2003, 57)

Naipaul is a writer who carries within him a whole burden of race, history, and language on the one hand and quests for a viable tradition with the knowledge of an ex-colonial individual on the other. His Indian critics like C. D. Narasimhaiah, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Sudha Rai and many others have pointed out the author's problematic position. Being torn between cultures and geographies, he has often thrown harsh comments against the host nations, as seen in the case of his first visit to India. Naipaul's is neither a traveller's glamorised picture of places and things nor does he want to present such a picture. His accounts in his travelogues are the deepening knowledge about life presented with exceptional finesse and brilliance. Naipaul's Indian travelogues present what he actually sees rather than what he dreams to see. What is very important in Naipaul's description of India is that he is well aware of “What is described and the self-conscious awareness of the act of trying to see correctly” (King 2003, 138). According to James Clifford, “travel” is “a figure for different modes of dwelling and displacement, for trajectories and identities, for storytelling and theorising in a postcolonial world of global contacts.” Travel today has become “a form both of exploration and discipline” for an expatriate writer (Clifford 1989). Though Naipaul's first book on India,

*India: An Area of Darkness*, ends with a chapter called “Flight”, actually he could not feel the presence of any strain of attraction in his mind for the country at that time, though almost thirteen years later, he did so and made a return journey to this country in 1975 and titled the first chapter of his second travelogue on India “An Old Equilibrium”. After another thirteen years, when Naipaul revisited the country in 1988, he wrote his voluminous work on India, *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, which ends with a chapter titled “The House on the Lake: A Return to India”. So, the usual tug of attraction-repulsion in a postcolonial travel writer, which is also very common to a diasporic writer, works in Naipaul, particularly with reference to his travels to India, a land of his forefathers.

Exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates who are dispossessed and expatriated, becomes something closer to a norm, an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classic canonical enclosures... Newly changed models and types jostle against older ones... (Said 1993, 384)

In 1962 Naipaul came to India in search of his cultural home, but he discovered that he did not belong to it by any means. But returning to India in the late 1980s, when many feared the collapse of the Indian central state because of regional, caste and religious conflicts, Naipaul finds signs of vitality and renewal. It is like creation within destruction, nationalism within provincialism. He finds some positive signs in India. Notions of freedom and self-assertion have moved from the elite to a broader range of society. Naipaul finds that a sense of identity that has been lost for a long past has reawakened in the minds of the Indians, and it is crying for immediate recognition. Naipaul also thinks that it was the British rule that brought unity among the Indians, leading to different nationalist movements for Independence. The notion of freedom has continued to grow and is supported by the recent economic changes in the country:

To awaken to history was to cease to live instinctively... it was to know a kind of rage ... every group thought itself unique in its awakening; and every group sought to separate its rage from rage of other groups. (Naipaul 1998, 420)

Naipaul’s continuing search for the presence of freedom among the Indians in the present book is more suitable both for the postcolonial world and a further stage in the process of decolonisation. Naipaul’s restrictive criteria of freedom operate as an unnecessarily narrow exclusiveness, squeezing out the meaning of humanism in a way that both hides and unfolds Naipaul’s ambivalence in recording his migrant sensibilities to the very nature of the particularity that he declares to endorse. Naipaul’s third book about India is his most comprehensive attempt to depict and accommodate the greatest number of views about contemporary life in the subcontinent. In his third visit to India, in spite of different sectarian

and secessionist eruptions in the country, the author finds stability in the country which he affirms at the very beginning of the book:

The caste or group stability that Indians had, the more focussed view, enabled them, while remaining whole themselves, to do work - modest, improving things, rather than revolutionary things - in conditions which to others might have seemed hopeless.... (Naipaul 1998, 08-09)

In his Indian travelogues, the author initially wanted to find out his root. From his boyhood days, Naipaul's inquisitive mind was always searching for his root, better say 'home'. The same searching spirit was also working in Naipaul when he came to London for his higher studies on scholarship. But he could not satisfy his searching mind in the centre of colonialism of which he himself is a product. Therefore, when he visited India for the first time in 1962, at least he was hopeful enough to find his own root or "home". But he became totally frustrated, for here too, he remained as exile as in England. His migrant sensibility got hurt. His travel to London was on commission, but to India was on mission. Though the mission was initially one of "root-searching", but later changed into a new one – to relate his findings in India to the country's culture and history. A new India gradually evolved in Naipaul's vision on his repeated visits to the country. Critics like C. D. Narasimhaiah, D. S. Maini, Nissim Ezekiel and many others become harsh enough when they see Naipaul's colonial self overshadowing India's realities in his first travel account of India. Real India frustrates Naipaul. He cannot find his hope in this country. But it is a fact that India has become a literary "home" for Naipaul throughout his writing career. His India is not in India but in his mind. India has become almost a psychological and cultural entity rather than a mere geographical location to him. Though the migrant cannot find his physical 'home' here, the expatriate writer finds his literary home definitely in India. He states it very clearly in his book *Finding the Centre*:

A writer after a time carries his world with him, his own burden of experience, human experience and literary experience (one deepening the other); and I do believe- especially after writing 'Prologue to an Autobiography' – that I would have found equivalent connections with my past and myself wherever I had gone. (Naipaul 1985, 10)

### **The Migrant's Narration of Indian Realities in the Travel Book**

*India: A Million Mutinies Now* can be regarded as a homecoming for Naipaul. It takes note of Naipaul's migrant sensibility after a long search amongst the present diminishing ripples of socio-political-cultural paradoxes of India. He finds a million mutinies raising their head in the margins – mutinies of caste, class, and gender. All these mutinies bear a positive significance to Naipaul who imagines the restoration of India to its past glory. Naipaul observes

that the dark covers, holding beneath them centuries of violence, are being put aside. The patterns of dominance are being broken into pieces. The very sights, which burst his spirit into a rage in *An Area of Darkness*, now signify some positive values to him. He sees the screen over India's dark and wounded parts being torn apart by these mutinous people in the margins. He sees these mutinies as empowering symbols, and with their encircling the centre, the author prognosticates India on its way to being strong again. Though the time gap between the publication of *An Area of Darkness* and that of *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is twenty-seven years, both books are no doubt commentaries on each other and provide clear examples of the diasporic forces at work within the writer's migrant sensibilities of which the author is not well-aware. The differences in attitude towards India in two different periods of visiting the country can be best reflected in the author's own comments in his book written later *India: A Million Mutinies Now*:

What I hadn't understood in 1962, or had taken too much for granted, was the extent to which the country had been remade; and even the extent to which India had been restored to itself .... (Naipaul 1998, 517)

In 27 years I had succeeded in making a kind of return journey, shedding my Indian nerves, abolishing the darkness that separated me from my ancestral past. (ibid., 516)

The India I had gone to in 1962 was like a different country. (ibid., 490)

The India of my fantasy and heart was something lost and irrecoverable. The physical country existed. I could travel to that; I had always wanted to. But on that first journey I was a fearful traveller. (ibid., 491)

Therefore, the third book about India bears a special significance as Naipaul makes a departure from his earlier two books on India. In *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, Naipaul maintains a wonderful balance between the interiority of his experience as an Indian migrant and the exteriority of a traveller. According to T.G. Vaidyanathan, "The book is an ostensible paean to the triumph of subaltern India over the centuries-old might of Upanishadic India" (Vaidyanathan 1990, 83). There are innumerable unforgettable vignettes as Naipaul meets and talks with a great variety of people managing all the way from Shiv Sena top leaders in Bombay to a failed Bengali scriptwriter whose views convince Naipaul that India is changing from its past position.

*India: A Million Mutinies Now* is flecked with a vast number of characters and voices who not only speak for themselves, but their talks also bear evidence of an internal evolution taking place in every field of India. Each character Naipaul meets confirms his belief that social change is a normal process in the universe. Papu is a twenty-nine-year-old Jain stockbroker who is a God-fearing person. He has been doing very well professionally and

“had made more money in the last five years than his father had made in all his working life” (Naipaul 1998, 09). His idea of social work is also different from that of the older Jains. He does not prefer building marble temples; he believes in building hospitals and orphanages. Therefore Papu, with all his ideals, appears before Naipaul as a representative of positive growth in the conventional Indian ways of living.

Naipaul cites his interviews with Mr. Raote and Mr. Ghate. Mr. Raote, a recruit of Shiv Sena whose father worked as a mere mechanic in All India Radio, suddenly finds an opening in furniture work, and his designs enjoy favour all over Bombay. He moves from furniture to the construction business and soon becomes prosperous. Mr. Ghate is a Sena official. His father was a mill worker. His family had never bought a book till he went to college. In the course of time, Mr. Ghate has progressed much compared to his mill worker father. Due to this progress in life, Mr. Ghate has formed some new ideas about himself and others. Similarly, the story of Ranjan, “The Secretary’s Tale”, is initiated to show how people’s idea of themselves comes to a great change with time. Ranjan’s grandfather was an unimportant official in a law court. He comes to Kolkata with his family where he makes his son a stenographer. In the 1946 Hindu-Muslim riots in Kolkata, the family loses everything. Then young Ranjan begins his career as a typist, and after many ups and downs, he finally settles in life after becoming a secretary in a business house in Bombay.

Naipaul also notices radical changes taking place in the thoughts of young Muslims in India. Naipaul meets a Muslim character Anwar, an educated and sensitive young man caught between his Muslim faith and its degeneration into violence. He absolutely believes in Islam and its age-old concept of brotherhood. In his opinion, lack of education is the main reason behind young Muslims resorting to crime and violence. Anwar’s attitude forces Naipaul to rethink about Muslims, particularly in India: “Anwar’s body and the background of life and more explicitly his communal extremism could not provoke Naipaul to turn ironical, with a marked difference of his attitude in the earlier two books on India. His sympathies are unambiguous, so much sincere as to arouse self-criticism” (Sarkar 2004, 223).

Religion at every age occupies a special place in India, even amidst the stress and strain of changes in different fields of life. Naipaul notices that despite so many changes replacing the age-old conventions, the Pujaris are much in demand as the Sena men in Bombay. It is a matter of great surprise to Naipaul that with the invasion of the Portuguese and the rise of Mughal Power in the North when a Hindu-India had little chance of survival, it survived almost as a miracle:

Through all the twists and turns of history, through all the imperial venturing in this part of the world, which that Portuguese arrival in India portended, and finally through the unlikely British presence in India, a Hindu-India had grown again, more complete and unified than any India in the past. (Naipaul 1998, 143)

In *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, Naipaul devotes a whole chapter named “Breaking Out” to rectify his past ideas about India. His old nerves getting strained with present Indian changes push forward his migrant feelings to wear a new shape and colour. The truth is that India always possesses an internal resistance power that saves it from collapsing as and when foreign forces have tried to break it. Naipaul records in this chapter how the old Hindu-India survives and turns itself into an agent of growth and development in new India. Even development in science and technology in India is rooted in the Hindu-Brahminical learnings of the country. Naipaul feels the presence of a force in India’s age-old Brahminical lessons in Sanskrit that has developed into a penchant for learning science in India. Therefore, Naipaul sees a kind of continuity of old learning in new India.

The chapter “Breaking Out” shows the layers of change coming to the Southern parts of India over a period of three generations. He refers to Deviah, a science reporter for a newspaper who is also well-versed in the mythological story of Ayappa. Dr. Srinivasan, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, comes from a family of priests. The new education of science and the Brahmin training co-exist in him. Another scientist Subramaniam also comes from a similar Hindu-Brahmin background. A conflict between science and his ritual practices in his mind brings forth a change in his sensibility.

Kala is another character in the author’s recording of India’s sustainable growth and development in different fields of life. Kala, a girl even single in her twenties, works for the publicity of a big organisation. Her parents want Kala to be financially independent. In a traditional Hindu family in India, this is rare. They do not want Kala to suffer the kind of deprivations that her mother underwent. Therefore, in this chapter, Naipaul portrays people from different sections of society who have come out of the old Hindu world of their parents and are advancing towards new goals and building up a new concept of Indianness. It is evident even in the words of Naipaul:

The old Hindu-Sanskrit learning- which a late 18<sup>th</sup> century scholar-administrator like Sir William Jones had seen as archaic and profound as the Greek ...that old learning had, 200 years later, in the most roundabout way, seeded the new. (1998, 152)

In August 1962, Naipaul, on his first visit to India, met with Sugar, a soft-featured Brahmin of Madras who gave Naipaul an idea of the Brahmin Hindu culture of the South of India. It was then that Naipaul was introduced to the revolt of the South against the North, non-Brahmin against Brahmin, dark against fair, and Dravidians against Aryans. But after more than twenty-seven years, when Naipaul revisits the southern part of India, he notices that the Brahmin world has already been undermined. He becomes interested in “tracing the fortunes of an obscure Triplicane Brahmin”, Kakusthan in Madras who has “moved from *loukika* to *vaidhika*<sup>1</sup>, from being in the world to being of the spirit” (Vaidyanathan 1990, 84). He refers to the Brahmin character Kakusthan who embraced the religious life after years of public service in Delhi and Ahmedabad and decided to live as a “pure brahmin”. Naipaul mentions



in his book the parting line of Kakusthan: “As long as the world exists, brahmins will always survive. Brahmins are indispensable to the society” (Naipaul 1998, 267). It is necessary to mention here that T. G. Vaidyanathan, in his review of *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, has called the book “an elegy to brahminism” (Vaidyanathan 1990, 85). The movement in the South actually began with Periyar giving the common people an idea of themselves. The DMK victory in the elections appears to the author as a great cause of pleasure to the non-brahmins. Periyar becomes their godfather. To Naipaul, Periyar does a great job for the caste-ridden society of the South.

However, Naipaul takes note of another contemporary revolution. It is the Maoist-style revolution started by peasants of lower castes who want to overthrow the government and kill the landlords, though such a revolution is nipped in the bud by the Police. It is best stated by Namrata Rathore Mahanta, “Only this time the continuity also spoke of a new identity among people – an assertion of their newly acquired idea of the self” (Mahanta 2004, 83). When Naipaul visits Shantiniketan to meet with Mr. Chidananda, whom he met first in 1962 as a worker of British ITC in Calcutta, the place appears to him “as a poet-educationist’s version of Gandhi’s Phoenix Farm in South Africa” (Naipaul 1998, 284). For Naipaul, the founding of the Brahma Samaj by Rabindranath’s father was an attempt to synthesise the learning from Britain and Europe with the old speculative Hindu faith of Vedas and Upanishads. Naipaul also learns from Chidananda that the great Bengali poet Tagore introduced many Indians to a new way of thinking about the world. Therefore, Naipaul does not hesitate to express his view: “It was one of the blessings of the Indian independence movement, that many of its leaders should have been men of large vision, capable of looking beyond their Indian cause” (Naipaul 1998, 289). In Kolkata, another Bengali character, Debu, seems very interesting to Naipaul. Debu became deeply involved with the Naxalite movement at its initial stage. But his major concern is the development of India. He is apprehensive of the intellectual decay and economic crisis. Debu’s confession enchants Naipaul: “I had come into this movement through indignation felt abroad at the position of India” (Naipaul 1998, 336). After meeting with so many persons in Bengal, it appears to Naipaul that in 1962 when he visited Kolkata for the first time, “Calcutta gave an immediate feel of the metropolis, with all the visual excitement of a metropolis, and all its suggestions of adventure and profit and heightened human experience” (1998, 281). But in the 1990s, it seems to him that with the exit of the British, the Anglo-Bengali intellectual life is coming to an end. In the poverty of the urban poor, he finds Kolkata fast turning into a state of decay. However, amidst such decay, he discovers certain aspects of regeneration in the cinema of Satyajit Ray and in the views of optimistic people like Debu.

### **Naipaul’s Difference from Some Others on Indian Views**

Irrespective of the place Naipaul lives, he writes from “the centre”. For him, “the centre” is his idealised past, i.e., his idealised India. Naipaul wears a new self in his *India: A Million*

*Mutinies Now*, leaving behind his old self as revealed in *An Area of Darkness*. The diaspora urges him to become a listener-narrator while experiencing the Indian realities. In this connection, it will not be out of place to initiate a comparative study of the writings of three well-known writers of Indian origin. The three great writers of Indian blood – N.C. Chaudhuri, R.K. Narayan and Salman Rushdie – took up India as their subject. It was quite natural that despite knowing India too well, their involvement with India is different both in degree as well as in kind from that of Naipaul. Chaudhuri lived in India for nearly seventy years whereas the other two lived outside India among the Indians, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. Naipaul's birth among indentured Trinidadian Indians cast in his mind a strong West Indian impact. Rushdie's high middle-class family fell direct victim to the Partition. Therefore, different kinds of Indian life lived by the three writers directly or indirectly regulated their approach to India.

Naipaul's is not Chaudhuri's kind of mind. His is an artist's criticism rising up from his love for art. He avoids directness and his art intervenes to make everything emanate to the point of revelation. His humour is also a forte in artistic revelation. Chaudhuri knew more about India. He spent half his life in Bengal, yet he never felt at ease with the Bengalees. His shift from Kolkata to Delhi made a major change in his attitude to India. India's Independence never gave him personal freedom for judgement. Therefore, he remained a Catholic Pope, so to speak, in a Protestant land though his unsavoury satires made people relish his literary works. His *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* becomes a subject of strong criticism even among the Indians. Naipaul and Rushdie are also autobiographical – Rushdie is a Partition victim and Naipaul an ill-fatedly West Indian. In *India: A Million Mutinies Now* Naipaul is not so worried about India. He is impressed by Aziz's second generation, Nazir in Kashmir who is an eighteen-year boy of good looks and a broader view of life. Naipaul visualises a bright prospect for India. But Rushdie does not require such an extended hope for India. To him, India is a land of stories. India breaks or builds does not matter; it supplies materials for his stories all the same. Like Haroun's father, Rashid, he cares less about who wins the election and who does not; he wants only his audience, all electors, to be amused (Rushdie 1991). Again, compared to Rushdie's lingam-worship in *Grimus*, it is a pilgrimage of a different kind, meticulously made-up as an invented story. Characters are weird in their existence and participation, and the world itself is eerie, though basically true. If Naipaul's is fact-fiction, Rushdie's is fiction-fact. Rushdie's India in *Midnight's Children* is a pain in fact, but a pleasure in fiction. But Naipaul's is India visited, even re-visited, a nostalgia never leaving him, yet ever remaining slipping out of his hold. Graham Greene's simulated "second home" is not his, nor his is Narayan's "home". It persists as Naipaul's nostalgia, which a migrant always suffers from.

R. K. Narayan, who assured Naipaul "India will go on" (Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* 2002, 232), is the writer who evoked India which Graham Greene hailed as his "second home" just in these words:

There are writers – Tolstoy and Henry James to name two – whom we hold in awe, writers – Turgenev and Chekhov – for whom we feel personal affections, other writers whom we respect – Conrad for example – but who hold us at a long arm's length with their 'courtly foreign grace', Narayan (whom I don't hesitate to name in such a context) more than any of them wakes in me a spring of gratitude; for he has offered me a second home. Without him I could never have known what it is like to be Indian (Narayan 2002, Back Cover Page).

Naipaul's responses in India are a kind of root-seeking and quite different from Chaudhuri's approach. Root is not Chaudhuri's concern, for he is not rootless. Chaudhuri's insistence on history is tinged with egotistic glamour of infallible truth and there is hardly any scope for an amusing relaxation of humour except for a frisking of facts. Critics like Edward Said and Michel Foucault argue that knowledge as grounded in the analysis of one group by another generally promotes the exercise of power over the group analysed. Travel narrative also takes part in such a power-knowledge nexus. But V. S. Naipaul's Indian travel narratives are of a different type. The type is best summed up by Glyne A. Griffith:

V. S. Naipaul, as travel writer, generally maintains rather than challenges the stereotypical representations of non-western cultures which Orientalism, as a discipline consolidated. His titles are often the sign of a narrative firmly set in the Orientalist mould (Griffith 1993, 89).

### Conclusion

A postcolonial world traveller, Naipaul, in his evolving assessment of the country, while commenting on the relationship between national and regional politics, between co-federal and communitarian formations, notes admiringly in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*:

India was set on the way of a new kind of intellectual life; it was given new ideas about its history and civilisation. The freedom movement reflected all of this and turned out to be the truest kind of liberation. (1998, 517)

According to V. S. Naipaul, the "million mutinies" based on caste, religion and regional affiliations, which he sees in his third visit to India, strengthen rather than weaken the concept of India's nation-state. He evinces that while economic advances have quickened the pace of these rebellions all over India, their impulse actually originates in the Freedom Movement which in its part carries the torch of Western concepts of freedom, law, human association, as well as a sense of the value of India's own civilisation and the nationalist spur of exploitation and humiliation by the British Raj for over two hundred years:

Independence had come to India like a kind of revolution; now there ... were many revolutions within that revolution ... All over India scores of particularities that had

been frozen by foreign rule, or by poverty, or lack of opportunity or abjectness, had begun to flow again. (Naipaul 1998, 6)

The people of India today have an idea of who they are. “Naipaul’s insistence on viewing India’s burgeoning communalism in such a positive light may seem puzzling, even perverse” (Jaggi 1991, 54). But the puzzlement deepens with the conclusions as seen in the final pages of the present text. Naipaul says, “a central will, a central intellect, a national idea” today occupies the heart of the Indians which did not exist here two hundred years ago. Another critic H. S. Lal has evaluated Naipaul’s third book on India in such a language: “This is a work of great enquiry. He wishes to correct his errors of the past observation of his homeland. He finds India a country of limitless energy and power and a land of strong determinations. The book is also a realisation of the writer’s inadequacy to understand India in right perspective” (Lal 1999-2000, 50).

The last chapter of *India: A Million Mutinies Now* opens with his personal account of his previous tours of India and the difference with the current visit. The difference, as stated by Naipaul himself, is quite helpful for a critical review of the author’s reactions to India. Naipaul suggests his return to “the House of the Lake” equivalent to his “Return to India”. He has no hesitation in confessing: “What was hidden in 1962, or not easy to see, what perhaps was only in a state of becoming, has become clearer. ...India was now a country of a million little mutinies” (Naipaul 1998, 517). *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is Naipaul’s final stage of the unravelling of the problematic relationship between himself and India, the migrant and his homeland and the diaspora and its quest for satisfaction.

While his book *An Area of Darkness* ends in “Flight”, an escape from the painful reality of India, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* at the end declares a “Return to India”. Therefore, Naipaul ends the narrative of *India: A Million Mutinies Now* with a final, optimistic interpretation of India which is actually rooted in his childhood conception of the country. Fawzia Mustafa states, “The optimism of Naipaul’s final prognosis for India is a somewhat welcome contrast to the sense of depletion and frustration that characterised both *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*” (Mustafa 1995, 194). The idea of “abjectness and defeat and shame” of his ancestors’ indentured servitude in the Caribbean which he had carried in him to India in his first trip in 1962 no doubt pushes him to a difficult position. But in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* Naipaul becomes finally able to say that, 27 years later, he has eradicated “the darkness” and shed his “old nerves” lying prostrate in his migrant sensibilities towards Indian history:

It fills me with old nerves to contemplate Indian history, to see how close we were to cultural destitution, and to wonder at the many accidents which brought us to the concepts — of law and freedom and wide human association. (Naipaul 1998, 398)

Naipaul states elsewhere:

I travel to discover other states of mind. And if for this intellectual adventure I go to places where people live restricted lives, it is because my curiosity is still dictated in part by my colonial Trinidad background .... (Naipaul 1985, 90)

The “restricted lives” of the Indians whom Naipaul describes in *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* satisfy his intellectual curiosity. Historical and Socio-political complexities in India act as stimuli to Naipaul’s curiosity and provide him the spirit to undergo an intellectual adventure. Therefore, apart from his Indian travelogues, his other works are also more or less populated with Indian characters, though Indians often appear there with different cultural identities. It obviously suggests the diasporic writer’s unconscious/subconscious connection with his homeland, though Naipaul never confesses that India is his ‘home’.

## Notes

1. The terms used by Kakusthan, “loukika” and “vaidhika” refer to the Hindu thought according to which worldliness and the life of the spirit are the two opposite forces, as in Christian religion, the eternal opposites are the forces of good and evil.

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