

## **Indian Perspective in the Travelogues of V. S. Naipaul: A Critical Study**

### **Abstract**

In his acclaimed Indian trilogy *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977) and *India: A million Mutinies Now* (1990), V. S. Naipaul critically evaluates Indian history, culture and politics. These books take the reader on a voyage from India that was 'an area of darkness' which has lost its values and culture to a place which is 'a wounded civilization,' and later on Naipaul discovers where 'a million mutinies' are happening. The present study attempts to show how Naipaul's writings can be read as a record of the history of the first four decades of post-independent India. Instead of theorizing or fictionalizing India in these travelogues, it seems Naipaul offers a realistic picture of Indian society, culture, politics and economy.

The objective of the proposed research work is to critically explain Naipaul's picture of Indian socio-political life as depicted by him in travelogues on India. The present work tries to show how Naipaul's observations about India are realistic or otherwise. It seems that these observations reflect the writer's west centric attitude towards India. He came to India with an overwhelmingly critical attitude towards the homeland of his ancestors. In the first visit, he has taken a personal record of his parent's 'homeland' and tries to see India of his own dream. He moves from place to place, comes close to people, closely notes down the workings of people and observes various rites, rituals. So the proposed study tries to show how Naipaul's vision about India is not impartial. Naipaul didn't come here as a detached traveler when India was going through transitional period. The present study makes an attempt to show how Naipaul came to India with a particular vision he has already formulated. When he finds that the country is not the country of his dreams, he offers harsh criticism.

The significance of the study can also be elaborated by referring Naipaul as 'Indian Diasporic Writer' (the writer of an Indian Origin). Such writers are situated on the margins of two cultures/countries. These writers can imagine India as an insider as well as

outsider. The study makes an attempt to show how Naipaul's images of India provide an alternative discourse on India.

This study tries to break fresh ground in exploring V.S. Naipaul's three books about his travels in India by treating these as a series whose meaning emerges only when considered them together. It focuses on the inextricable intertwining of Naipaul's writings with his personal experiences and demonstrates how his critique of Indian culture and politics emerge from his 'Diaspora' worldview.

The present research is divided into the following chapters:

The first chapter entitled '**An Introduction: The Making of V. S. Naipaul**', discusses Naipaul's life and upbringing. It throws light on Naipaul's educational background and important literary landmarks in his life. It takes an overview of Naipaul's fictional and non-fictional writing. This chapter tries to show the signs of Naipaul's rootlessness. At the same time, the chapter evaluates Naipaul as a writer of Indian Diaspora. As the travelogues taken for study are set in post colonial India, this chapter has briefly taken a review of postcolonial writing, keeping Naipaul's position in mind.

The second chapter '**Historical Review of Travelogue as a Literary Genre**' explores the tradition of travelogue as a literary genre. It tries to differentiate between fiction and non-fiction. This chapter reviews travel writing in the form of origin and development of this literary genre with the passing of time. Finally this chapter discusses the position of Naipaul as a travel writer.

The third chapter describes '**Naipaul: An Irritated Traveler**' and studies his first semi-autobiographical travel book *An Area Of darkness*. This chapter analyzes colonialism and its treatment at the hands of Naipaul with ironic detachment. Simultaneously, this chapter tries to explore the reasons behind negative commentary of India by Naipaul in the preconceived notion in his mind. It seems Naipaul was brought up with romantic picture of India which gets shattered with the actual encounter with India.

The fourth chapter presents '**Naipaul's Interrogation and Interpretation of India**' and evaluates Naipaul's second travelogue *India: A Wounded Civilization* critically. This

chapter brings forth Naipaul's systematic assessment of Indian culture and socio-political life. The chapter attempts to study why the whole atmosphere in the book offers disillusionment for the writer at the same time it focuses on why he could be seen as leading the readers to view only those aspects that he felt had created 'cultural decay' in India. The chapter also portrays how the book is less emotive and more analytical.

The fifth chapter entitled '**Naipaul's Celebration of Liberation of spirit**' takes into account Naipaul's last travel book *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. It highlights the systematic method of Naipaul to depict contemporary situation in India prevailing in 1980s. This chapter throws light on positive conceptualization of India by Naipaul. The chapter tries to capture positive growth at individual level and at the level of society as depicted by Naipaul.

The sixth and the last chapter is in the form of '**The Conclusion**' which takes a stock of the previous chapters and makes an attempt to depict Naipaul as a 'Diaspora Writer' with west centric attitude towards the country of his ancestral homeland. This chapter evaluates gradual change in the attitude of Naipaul towards India.