

Chapter-V

Naipaul's Celebration of Liberation of spirit in

India: A Million Mutinies Now

VI.1 Introduction

The present chapter is an analysis of Naipaul's third book on India in his acclaimed 'Indian Trilogy' named *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. It was based on his journey to the land of his ancestors, India from December 1988 to February 1990. During this long journey, he went to Bombay, then Goa, Chandigarh, Bangalore, and Madras in the South, then Calcutta, Lucknow and Punjab, and finally to Kashmir, at the Hotel Liward where he stayed at the close of his first Indian voyage almost thirty years before. It seems that this journey brings out the unexpected from Naipaul.

In Indian political history, 'mutiny' is a politically charged term referring to the 1857 uprising against British rule during which thousands of defiant Indians were killed by the empire. As the title of the travelogue suggests, Naipaul goes to almost all of the troubled spots, where mutinies are to be found. He sees a million mutinies breaking out in the country, mutinies of castes, of class, and of gender. He sees these rebellions as positive movements towards the restoration of the India. Naipaul observes that the dark shrouds, holding beneath them centuries of violence are being torn apart; structures of dominance are being dismantled. Naipaul finds India in its officers, kitchens, galleries and chawls; in Dalit rebellions and in women's movements. In the very same sights that had shocked him into a rage in *An Area of Darkness*, he now sees positive movement. He sees wounded India's dark, unpleasant bandages being torn by these mutinous people in the process. He sees all these as empowering symbols and with their coming to the centre, he sees India on its way to being whole again. He observes:

What the mutinies were also helping to define was the strength of the general intellectual life, and the wholeness and

humanism of the values to which all Indians now felt they could appeal. And – strange irony – the mutinies were not to be wished away. They were part of the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India's growth, and part of its restoration. (Naipaul, 1990, 604)

Naipaul tries to cover all sorts of mutinies ranging from regional secessionist movements to religious and caste tensions across the country, from the Ex-Naxalite followers in Calcutta to the Dalits or untouchables and the Maharashtrians and the Shiv Sena, and from the Muslims in Bombay to the Sikh activists in Punjab. The breakdown of old loyalties, along with a new consciousness of religion or caste such as the surge of anti-Brahmanism that took him to Madras and Lucknow, is of interest to Naipaul. Chandra Chatterjee, a critic on Naipaul, remarks about the writer's vision of India, in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, thus:

Naipaul's visit to India will be another way of re-writing the nation for himself. Through his journeys to various corners of the country he will have to see exactly where and how his world view strikes a relationship with his experience in India. (Panwar, 2007, 96)

From this comment, it could be seen that the history of India is 'rewritten' by Naipaul based on the experiences that suit his world view of India. India is a different place for Naipaul. This is the reason why he is able to mentally/physically distance himself with the people and look at them subjectively. Naipaul's point of view could be seen further commented by Mel Gussow thus:

In several cases, including that of his new book, Mr. Naipaul's work has been categorized as travel writing, a label that he accepts as "a portmanteau word." But in no sense is it a book for travellers: it is a book by a traveller. One is not looking at the sights, one is exploring the people. I love landscape, but a place is its people." (Gussow, 1991, 2)

Naipaul's India series of travel narratives do not prove to be an informative document for a 'reader' who does not know about India, as his attitude towards the country is mainly highlighted through his narratives. He himself is aware of his stand as a traveller and a writer in India. He finds India a 'strange' land. The writer's Indian identity makes the narrative more interesting. He himself remarks:

It was the India by which, in all the difficulties of our circumstances, we felt supported. It was an aspect of our identity, the community identity we had developed, which, in multi-racial Trinidad, had become more like a racial identity. This was the identity I took to India on my first visit in 1962. And when I got there I found it had no meaning in India. (Naipaul, 1990, 9)

Thus the land of his ancestors continually attracts him. So he visits again in 1989.

VI. 2 Change of Perception

During this third visit of Naipaul to India, one observes change in Naipaul's previous perceptions of India recorded in *An Area of Darkness* and in *India: A Wounded Civilization*. It seems that it brings into question the factors that go into the formation of a writer's perspective. He finds positive changes in the society everywhere. Bruce King agrees with Naipaul's observation and remarks in *Modern Novelists: V. S. Naipaul* thus:

The world has always consisted of change: it is necessary for people and cultures to adapt. This must; however be done creatively, making use of local resources, and with planning and hard work rather than by mimicry of the formal colonial powers. (King, 1993, 9)

A critic on Naipaul, Suvir Kaul in her article 'On V S Naipaul on India' also supports this change of perception thus:

India: A Million Mutinies Now is marked by Naipaul's new found ability to listen to people and to find their lives evidence of energy and hope rather than of despair and dislocation. And now, in India, there is some re-examination of his earlier response. (Mehrotra, 2003, 241)

Naipaul himself explains the process – sometimes in direct sentences and sometimes in his very manner of documenting facts. My analysis begins with the last chapter in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, 'The House on the Lake: A Return to India' with the specific purpose of establishing a link between *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. Although placed twenty – seven years apart in time, both books appear to be commentaries on each other and provide explicit examples of the diasporic writer at work. It appears that he is unaware of it. I cite few examples:

What I hadn't understood in 1962, or had taken too much for granted, was the extent to which the country had been remade restored to itself ...

I had carried in my bones that idea of abjectness and defeat and shame. It was the idea I had taken to India on that slow journey by train and ship in 1962; it was the source of my nerves....

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. (Naipaul, 1990, 602)

The India I had gone to in 1962 was like a different country. (Naipaul, 1990, 571)

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. (Naipaul, 1990, 572)

These stand in contrast to the personal insights scattered all over in *An Area of Darkness*:

The physique of Europe had melted away.... Men had been diminished and deformed; they begged and whined. Hysteria had been my reaction It mattered little through whose eyes I was seeing the East; there had as yet been no time for this type of self- assessment.

Superficial impressions, intemperate reactions. (Naipaul, 1964, 6)

.....the reawakening within India of disputes about language, religion, caste and region. India, it seems, will never cease to require the arbitration of a conqueror ... this absence of growth and development ... only series of beginnings, no final creation. (Naipaul, 1964, 202)

In a year I had not learned acceptance. I had learned my separateness from India ... (Naipaul, 1964, 252)

Ten months later I was to revisit Bombay and to wonder at my hysteria..... It was my eye that had changed. (Naipaul, 1964, 45)

It is evident that Naipaul has written about something more than India. He has also written about himself in the process. The line of demarcation between the two subjects that Naipaul the writer deals with is very thin and one cannot entirely agree with Anniah Gowda that Naipaul is only "writing about himself, not India." (Gowda, 1970, 170). Nor can one agree with William Walsh when he credits Naipaul for his "needle like precision" and "literary acupuncture" (Walsh, 1973, 75). Perhaps working with double vision (external and internal) creates this kind of writing. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is a book in which Naipaul has been able to create a pattern out of his double vision. Perhaps, the book strikes a wonderful balance between the interiority of Naipaul's experience and the external experiences that he encounters and observes. The book is divided into nine chapters and each chapter is a profusion of characters

and voices, which speak for themselves. In the remaining part of the chapter, I will analyze them separately bringing forth elements of Indian perspective.

VI.3 Indian Perspective in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*

VI.3.1 Bombay-City of Dreams

The first chapter 'Bombay Theatre' discusses the lives of eleven people from different walks of life, their families and acquaintances, their loyalties and prejudices. These people narrate their own stories. Most of the narrators are urban, middle aged, middle class males. But before that, it records, in Naipaul's own words, the factors that had governed his reactions to India in 1962. This, in a way, provides a prelude to the entirely different way in which Naipaul records his reactions in the pages that follow. Naipaul notices that these people are acquiring individuality. In this respect Nixon States:

Naipaul's decision to give the locals more airtime is a gesture of great significance. For the centrifugal suffering of voices, stages his overriding concern with the dispersion of India, the dismembering of the nation's body prolific under pressure from myriad mutinies. (Nixon, 1992, 27)

It appears that Naipaul has changed his perspective from Naipaul of *An Area of Darkness*. He begins with the story of Papu, a twenty – nine year old Jain stockbroker, a mild mannered and God fearing person who has been doing very well professionally. The pattern of growth is drawn out—he 'had made more money in the last five years than his father had made in all his working life" (Naipaul, 1990, 11). Unlike his father, he had received formal education. He recognized his lack of the "killer instinct" in business and had thus moved to those business areas to which he was temperamentally more suited.

He suffered periods of anxiety regarding the predicament of the mild race businessmen in face of aggressive business tactics adopted by others. He was also deeply concerned about social welfare and wanted to devote most of his time to it. However, he was also aware that he could invest more money in social welfare by

working harder in his profession rather than by working in the slums. Papu had devised his own programme of striking a balance between his job and his devotion to social work. His idea of social work was also very different from that of the older generation of Jains. Instead of building marble temples, he believed in building orphanages and hospitals. He used the latest expertise in his work but was very deeply rooted in his religious beliefs. Papu is thus presented as a representative of positive growth in the conventional Indian business world. Through Papu, one also gets a glimpse of the ways of functioning of other business houses like Tata, Birla, Bajaj and Ambani. With this interaction Naipaul comments that new generation of businessmen is coming up replacing traditional concept of business tactics.

VI.3.2 Emergence of Political Leaders

After his interaction with Papu, Naipaul meets the 'area leader' of Shiv Sena, Mr Patil. His father had worked for forty years in the tool – room of a factory and was so weighed down by family responsibilities that he had no idea of the activities of the Shiv Sena. Mr. Patil was brought up comfortably and this gave him security and an idea of his social concerns. He joined the Shiv Sena and steadily worked for the people in his 'area.' But there was a paradox in the way Mr. Patil looked at things; he was deeply concerned about the deprivation of Maharashtrians brought about by non-Maharashtrians but he had absolutely no sympathy for the Dalit organizations. He believed that they hadn't suffered much and their activism was mainly political. His antipathy towards Muslims verged on hatred but he had no qualms about "exporting man power to Dubai and the Middle East" for a living (Naipaul. 1990, 26). Although Mr. Patel's *atma – vishwas* was his cherished gift from Ganpati, he was reluctant to recognize the same *atma – vishwas* in Dalits.

In Mr. Patil, one finds the earliest beginnings of the recognition of the 'self'. His idea of 'self' and self – confidence is muddled up and biased but it is a kind of beginning. This was absent in his father's generation when the main concern was the day- to – day needs of the family. In Mr. Patil's generation, the concerns had broadened from the persona to the social sphere but this had also brought with it a lot of confusion typical to societies passing through change.

Mr. Raote had been one of the first eighteen recruits of the Shiv Sena and was now the chairman of the standing committee of the Bombay Corporation. His father had worked as a mechanic in All India Radio and had educated all his children. Mr. Raote's first ambition was to join the military. He couldn't get into the military; he couldn't do a course in engineering as his father couldn't afford the expense. So he took up a job as a clerk in the Corporation while his father worked as a carpenter in a film studio to enable his sister to become a doctor. His marriage was a "love – match" and thus was followed by more financial burdens. He found an opening in furniture work and his designs found favour all over Bombay. From furniture, he moved to the building business and had been doing very well ever since. His dedication to the Sena and its work had continued all along. In his business he had worked "to accommodate the middle- class Maharashtrian" (Naipaul, 1990, 61). His front door had no latch, it was always open. He was deeply religious and his religion was an extension of his courage and confidence which branched off into his social concerns:

The worldly man who wanted to be an officer and an engineer, the Sena worker, the devout Hindu: there were three layers to him, making for a chain of belief and action. (Naipaul, 1990, 62)

Papu worked in Dharavi, feeding around five hundred people every Sunday. But his idea of service was to help people help themselves. Charity for the sake of charity had no value. It was no longer the old Hindu idea of charity as an automatic act to earn divine goodwill for oneself. It was now strongly linked to social concern.

Mr. Ghate was also a Sena official. His father had been a millworker and his family "had never owned a book" till he went to college (Naipaul, 1990, 72). In contrast to Mr. Patil and Mr. Raote, Mr. Ghate was not at all religious. Although he could afford better accommodation, he continued to live in a chawl because both he and his wife were used to the chawl life. His wife had serious problems coping with the solitude of the staff quarters. "Absence of civic sense" was the most difficult problem and he believed that one had to start with the children to rectify this malady among the chawl dwellers". (Naipaul, 1990, 76). Mr. Ghate had progressed to his mill – worker father. His progress had given him new ideas, about himself and about others. These ideas

were sometimes in conflict with each other but Mr. Ghate carried on, anchored by Sena pride.

On the other side of Sena monopoly was the criminal world of Bombay. The businessmen and politicians used professional criminals to get their work done:

To deter political defections, to encourage political donations; to enforce payment of a debt, to compel adherence to an unwritten 'black-money' contract. (Naipaul, 1990, 81)

Having turned criminals, these people had fallen off the mainstream and now there was no hope return. With criminal records against their names they were doomed to spend the rest of their lives in the underworld. Here too, the religious faith had somehow survived. How they explained their actions in the light of their deep faith in religion was a paradox. Living in the shadow of death, cut off from society, these people held on to whatever faith their deities inspired in them in spite of knowing that they were doomed.

The gangsters at the top... the dons... could be courted by political parties and film people.... But the men below, the men in the middle... were doomed. (Naipaul, 1990, 87-88)

With these meetings, Naipaul points out criminalization of politics in the city of dreams i. e. Bombay.

VI.3.3 Dilemma of Muslim Youngsters

During this dialogue with Sena leaders, Naipaul also visits Mohammed Ali Road, densely populated Muslim area in downtown Bombay. He is guided by Anwar, an educated and sensitive young man. It seems that he is caught between his Muslim faith and its degeneration into violence. He had absolute faith in Islam and its concept of brotherhood. He believed that the world could be set right through the teachings of Islam and lack of education was the main cause behind young Muslims slipping into crime and violence. He says:

It is inevitable that they will fight for Islam. It is a contradictory role. They will continue their criminal activities, but at the same time they will read the *Koran*, and do the *namaaz*, five times a day. The community does not admire these people, but the people are enchanted by the way the dons behave with the common Muslims. (Naipaul, 1990, 43)

He recognized the hopeless situation of the crime infested area where he lived but could not ever think of leaving that area for a better life elsewhere. His thoughts were not of personal progress but of the progress of the community. The very fact that he had been able to preserve his sensitivity and his reason in spite of living amidst group fights and murders was a sign of change. Anwar's grandfather had died at forty, his father was happy to have crossed sixty four. This too, spoke of the better life that had come to the people. This encounter with Anwar presents different side of Muslim Youth, who are in a critical situation looking forward for progress.

VI.3.4 Commercialization of Rituals

Religion had a special place in a fast changing society that was passing through the stress and strain of change and pujaris were much in demand. In Bombay, with its paradoxes and its divisions of faith, the pujaris were as much in demand as the Sena men.

The pujaris who are humourously called as "Electric pujaris" customized religious ceremonies and offered recorded pujas on tape; the other pujari who has been dealt in detail in the text was satisfied with whatever he earned and conducted pujas in the traditional way. This variety appealed to the people of Bombay for whom the very concept of religion and puja was undergoing change. Nandini worked as a journalist and did not believe in ritualistic puja, but the pujari was called by her family on auspicious occasions. The pujari had a much more comfortable life in Bombay than what he could have had in his native village.

VI.3.5 Bombay- Home of Migrants

Subroto had come to Bombay from Calcutta. He was lucky to have adjusted to his work in the art department of an advertising agency. His friend, the film writer, had not been so lucky. His was a story of defeat. He could not work in accordance with the current demands of the film directors. His loyalty to his art made him pay a very heavy price. He not only lost his work, but lost out on goodwill as well. He continued with whatever screen – writing he was offered and kept on drifting back to Calcutta:

Calcutta is where I studied. I keep on drifting back. It's my home town, mentally. It's where I feel comfortable. That's where I feel things are happening all the time, and that's where I acquired the ambition a film writer. (Naipaul, 1990, 99).

The Bengali film writer was one of those millions who drifted across the metropolis, those who could not be rooted. Naipaul comments that Subroto is representative case of many migrants in the city. The city has accommodated all of them. Amongst these individuals, some got success and others remained unsuccessful.

VI.3.6 Movement in the Lower Class

The last part of chapter one is the rise of 'Dalit Panthers' as a strong force uniting lower class people. It is the story of Namdeo Dhasal and his wife Mallika who represent another layer of society where there has been considerable movement. Namdeo Dhasal was the founder of the 'Dalit Panthers' and was also known for the poetry that he wrote. His political career had seen many ups and downs but he was not much bothered about that. Initially, his political failure had caused him to fall ill but he recovered. His poetry spoke of raw pain. His wife Mallika was the daughter of communist folk singers. Her mother was a high caste Hindu and father, a Muslim. Mallika and Namdeo's marriage was a marriage of the minds which faltered on ground realities. The outcome was Mallika's autobiography, *I Want to Destroy Myself*. Namdeo had come a long way from being an outcaste Dalit in his native village. He drew inspiration from Dr. Ambedkar and thus an identity for himself and for others. He worked for the prostitutes and other oppressed classes of people. He had himself lived

through much oppression as a young 'Mahar' caste boy in his village, as a taxi driver in Bombay, and as a resident of the "Dhor slum." Therefore he was full of anger. It was his exposure to Dr. Ambedkar's movement that made him channelize his anger into a positive political force.

This assertion of the self was the beginning of the dismantling of old prejudices that required some men to be lower than others. It was a way of growth for thousands of marginalized people. With the coming of education and equal job opportunities a beginning had been made, but it was a political movement like Namdeo's that gave people an identity which they could be comfortable with, and even proud of.

The first section 'Bombay Theatre' ends with Namdeo's story. Naipaul has presented a cross – section of life in metropolitan Bombay. Each nook and corner, each one – roomed chawl is closely observed. The chapter depicts a metropolis undergoing great change. The movement is shown in occasional ruptures of the social fabric and in the somewhat paradoxical values of people.

The second chapter in the book is 'The Secretary's Tale'. It is the story of Rajan, his father and his grandfather. It tells how people's idea of themselves changes with the passage of time. Rajan's grandfather was a petty official in one of the law courts near Tanjore. He got into a fight with a British officer and had no option but to leave. He came to Calcutta with his family. There he trained his son to be a stenographer. The stenographer son rose to great heights and lived in style. In the 1946 Hindu – Muslim riots in Calcutta he lost everything. Young Rajan was brought up by his step – sister. He too, began his career as a typist but struggled all along for a more creative job. After a number of jobs with various firms in different capacities, Rajan too became a secretary with a firm Bombay. He felt he had a lot more talent and creativity that could have been put to better use but he lived with a sense of fulfillment at having been able to take care of all his responsibilities. He says:

I haven't risen beyond what my father and grandfather could rise to, at the beginning of the Century. The only consolation is that, even as a secretary, I am not as badly off as most other

Secretaries are. And perhaps, even, I no longer believe I am just a secretary, (Naipaul, 1990, 158)

VI.3.7 Changing face of South India

The third chapter 'Breaking Out' takes the readers to South India. It observes the layers of change that had come to the southern parts of India over a period of three generations. It begins with Naipaul's observations on Goa; he says that its Portuguese past has nearly wiped out the old India. With the Portuguese occupation of Goa, the conquest of Vijaynagar and the rise of Mughal power in the North, Hindu India had very slim chances of survival. But Hindu India survived. Naipaul says:

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, 1990, 167)

It seems that the chapter 'Breaking Out' is mainly about how the old Hindu-Brahmin India survived and turned itself into an agent of growth and development in new India. Deviah, a science reporter for a newspaper, went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Ayappa every year. He was also well versed in the story of Ayappa and the mythological details it contained.

Dr. Srinivasan, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission came from a family of priests. His grandfather had been a Purohit and was only a matriculate. He wanted his son to pass the university examination and so the son went to the university. However, Sanskrit lessons continued at home and the son was taught all the religious rituals. In 1925, the son Dr. Srinivasan's father, joined the education department and became a teacher. The new education and the Brahmin training stayed together in him. These were the forces that created Dr.Srinivasan. Naipaul sees this as a kind of continuity of old learning:

The old Hindu–Sanskrit learning – which a late 18th century scholar–administrator like Sir Willam Jones had seen as archaic... that old learning had, 200 years later, in the most roundabout way, seeded the new. (Naipaul, 1990, 177)

Subramaniam, also a scientist, came from a similar Hindu – Brahmin background. His grandfather understood that knowledge of English was essential. He could not do much about his own education but he sent his son to an English medium school. This son went to the university and later worked with a leading scientist of those times. With knowledge of modern science, there occurred a change in sensibility. There was a conflict between science and the rituals he practiced at home. He rejected caste prejudices and rituals. The concept of puja also changed. He started writing books on science in the local language. Into this family was born Subramaniam. He could look at a century of change within his family in a very analytical manner. He saw predominance of Brahmins on the Indian science scene as a ‘development of history’ and although he credited the old Hindu Brahmin tradition of pursuit of knowledge for this development, he was also aware that Brahmins were “responsible still for many things on our social landscape” (Naipaul, 1990, 187-188).

Pravas came from a priestly family of the East. His grandfather was a priest; his father had retired as a government clerk. His grandfather had lived in a secure world as purohit to a royal family; his religion was his profession. For Pravas’s father the security of the old world was replaced. His job with the government gave him his livelihood. The puja, the rituals and the chanting of mantras was a part of his personal world. He read religious texts and tried to interpret them. He also read modern philosophical works in English, Devnagari and Bengali. He had received the Gandhian philosophy. All this brought about a change in him. His attitude towards rituals, food and dress- related rules changed. In his son, Pravas, these were further modified:

I have made one more level of transformation than my father did from his father’s time. I am more liberal in outlook than my father. I’ve probably become more questioning My father

got a part of what his father had, and I have only a part of the rituals my father had (Naipaul, 1990, 196)

Kala's story is also one of progress. She "did the publicity for a big organization." (Naipaul, 1990, 200) She was in her twenties and single. Her grandfather had started from nothing and had gone on to become an administrator in a princely – state. Her mother studied up to class ten and was married. This marriage distorted her life and neither she nor her parents could do anything about it. That is why she brought up Kala financially independent. Thus ideas and ideologies changed over a period of three generations and the potential that was neglected in Kala's mother came to be recognized and valued in Kala.

Prakash hailed from an agricultural family of Bellary and was a minister in the non- Congress state government of Karnataka. He was a lawyer before he entered politics. He spoke of the power that the politicians wielded and the chaos created due to the transition caused by industrialization and the green revolution:

During this transition period, we are slowly cutting from the moral ethos of our grandfathers, and at the same time, we don't have the westerner's idea of discipline and social justice. At the moment things are chaotic here. (Naipaul, 1990, 221)

The pundit who worked as *mukhthesar* for the maharaja of Mysore had his own history. His grandfather worked as a cook in the palace and this grandfather sent him to the Sanskrit College in Mysore city where he studied for twenty year. At the end of his education, he was appointed *mukhthesar* by the Maharaja. He served the Maharaja even after he lost his privy purse. After the death of the Maharaja he took up a job as the manager of a marriage hall. He was now no longer the Maharaja's *mukhthesar* but a man in his own right:

Four times a year now he went to the palace, to make offerings to the head of the royal family.... But now he didn't go as an employee or palace servant. He went as a man in his own right. (Naipaul, 1990, 236)

The chapter 'Breaking Out' portrays people from different walks of life who had come out of the old the Hindu world of their parents and grandparents and were working towards new goals, and building up a new concept of selfhood. They were thus ushering into the Indian scene a new growth and development.

VI.3.8 Periyar Movement

The next chapter named 'Little Wars' was in the form of the movements in South India that sought to break the old order not in a gradual way but as a direct and immediate goal. It seems to be a war between South and North, between Brahmin and non- Brahmin.

Naipaul devotes considerable part of this chapter to depict the movement in the south that had begun with Periyar. According to him it had given people an idea of themselves. The DMK victory in the elections was a great cause of celebration for the non- Brahmins. Periyar, the man behind the cause was highlighted. As years passed, breaks occurred even within the DMK. Periyar, being an atheist and a rationalist, offered the vision of a world governed by science, free of caste and religion. His war was against everything that created caste distinction – be it temples or temple tanks. But his movement was indifferent to the “looking” of temples and to the “replacement of temple icons by fakes” (Naipaul, 1990, 262). The chapter gives a detailed account of Periyar's life and ideologies and how these came to be imbibed by his followers. Entire passages are narrated by Sadanand Menon, follower of Periyar and the figure of the writer hardly surfaces. It is through Menon that the reader comes to know how the Periyar movement in the end came to stand for those very things that it had opposed in the first place:

The anti- Brahmin movement was not a movement of all the non – Brahmin castes. It was a movement mainly of the middle castes When their government came to power, they become the oppressors. (Naipaul, 1990, 264)

However, the Periyar movement had touched people in various ways. Gopalakrishnan turned into a rationalist at a very young age. At school he made to

realize his middle caste status that was thought fit only for "grazing cattle" (Naipaul, 1990, 265). Gradually, Gopalakrishnan moved away from religion and found confidence in Periyar's movement and literature. He entered publishing business and published school textbooks and books about Periyar's movement.

The passion of Palani was stronger than that of Gopalakrishnan. The seed of this passion was when his brother was shouted at for taking water from a Brahmin hotel. This sense of injustice kept building up, and when Palani came across Periyar, he found all his answers. His father was a government clerk but Palani could become an engineer because of the seats that were reserved for students from non- Brahmin castes. He had Periyar to thank for this concession. From a weaver to a clerk to an engineer – the story of his family had been one of progress. This was the way in which Periyar's movement had touched so many lives, so many families.

Passion breeds passion. Kakushthan's passion was to be a pure and perfect Brahmin. This passion had come to him at a very late stage in life. As a school going child he had to suffer for his Brahmin dress, for the caste – mark on his forehead and for his *churki*. He had long and heated discussions with his father but he was not allowed to adopt modern ways. He tried to run away from this Brahmin past but in the end he came back. His only passion in life now was to live the pure life of a Brahmin. This he had done by beginning to make minor and major changes in the old Brahmin lifestyle. That was the way the community could be preserved.

Veeramani was Periyar's successor, his "philosophical heir". His consistent loyalty to Periyar had earned him his position. His marriage was also arranged by Periyar to a girl from an established family so that he could take care of the party without having to worry about his livelihood. He carried on the Self – Respect movement and his own life was a story of success – financial as well as social. His father had been a tailor and now his children were all studying abroad. The anti – Brahmin movement had catapulted him into glory and fame.

There was another kind of revolution that, for a short period of time, broke out like a war. This was a Maoist style revolution started by peasants belonging to the

lower castes. They wanted to overthrow the government and kill the landowners. The rebellion was soon controlled by police intervention but it uncovered the failure of the Periyar movement “.... Periyar had struggled against caste alone; he hadn't thought of class” (Naipaul, 1990, 316). The people at the lowest level had been left out and the rebellion was an assertion of their existence and their need to be included in the mainstream.

The chapter records revolutions and rebellions at personal as well as public level. This unrest was the way of new beginning for the non – Brahmin middle castes and the lower castes. For people like Kakusthan and Sugar, it was a struggle to maintain the purity and continuity of the old world. The struggle was on both sides, it was between the old world and the new. Both worlds changed, both adapted and continued. Only this time the continuity also spoke of a new identity among people – an assertion of their newly acquired idea of the self.

VI.3.9 Glimpses of Eastern India

‘After the Battle’, fifth chapter of the book gives us to the glimpses of Eastern India in general and Calcutta in particular. Like the British architecture in Calcutta, Chidananda Das Gupta was also a product of British times; “a boxwallah”. Chidananda worked for ITC and had a comfortable lifestyle. But he was not comfortable with the two sides of his existence; his status and work at the ITC required him to be someone he was not and his yearning for intellectual and creative life called for a different kind of life. His association with Shantiniketan was his life force. In the end he left his job at ITC and became a film – maker and writer. Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajit Ray formed an important part of his mental makeup.

Ashok was a South Indian Brahmin whose father had settled in Calcutta. He was into the marketing business. He had got into this profession with great difficulty. His generation was passing through an era of change where old values had to be weighed against new values. He rejected the traditional “bride – seeing” and opted for a self – choice marriage. His professional life was an example of regeneration on the Indian business scene. The quiet world of the boxwallah had given way to cut throat

competition and marketing had begun to make tough demands on people. The Marwari businessmen had been gaining monopoly over the major business house, while at the other end the Bengalis were content to display their trade unionism and criticize the Marwaris. The Marwari success story in Calcutta had been fuelled by the Bengali mindset:

...he is indolent, he doesn't want to work... and he must protect his dignity at all costs. He will publicly despise the Marwari trader, but he wouldn't do the same job himself. (Naipaul, 1990, 402)

Dipanjan and his wife Arati taught in colleges. Both had been associated with the Naxalite movement in Calcutta during their college days. Their marriage had cut across caste barriers evoking much opposition from Arati's parents. They came from families that had modern education. Arati's father was a scientist and an IES officer whereas Dipanjan's father was a Ph.D. in biochemistry and a communist. The Naxalite movement had been the passion of Dipanjan's life and when the movement met its end, Dipanjan withdrew and started pondering over what had gone wrong. What had seemed to be a wonderful beginning for millions of people in the villages seemed to have gone astray midway. Dipanjan's years in jail with other Naxalite prisoners, mainly those accused of urban violence including murders disillusioned him about the movement. He was released by the Government and he went to London to study physics. On his return, he chose to teach in an obscure college and avoided meeting his friends from earlier days. The story of Dipanjan and Arati is that of a generation led astray by ideas. It was a generation whose ideas for reform were its undoing.

Debu, who held a high position as an executive, had been associated with the Naxalite movement in its earliest stages but had later, developed ideological differences with the leadership. He had his own clear – cut idea about the reason behind the failure of the movement. Debu had been closely involved with the beginnings of the movement and had actually believed in its success. He had even tried to reason out Charu Mazumdar's policy of individual killing. Later he fell out with Charu Mazumdar and went underground in April 1970.

Debu's major concern was the idea of development in India. He was pained by the intellectual decay and the economic crisis of India, especially the sufferings of the poor. He still believed in the revolution and was convinced that a revolution could set things right here and now. Earlier, Debu had been pained when, during his lectures on India in America, he had been asked – "How come you're starving and begging for food, if you're so great?". (Naipaul, 1990, 391). This had led to his joining the radical communist wing. Years after the failure of the Naxalite movement, he still believed in revolution:

The only change – a big change – between then and now is that at that time, in the late 60s, I thought I could be a part of the revolution, and now I know that I shall be a *witness* to it. A supportive witness. I don't think the need for revolution has changed. (Naipaul, 1990, 389)

The chapter ends with Naipaul's comments on Calcutta. With the going away of the British he sees the Anglo – Bengali intellectual life coming to an end. In the poverty of the urban poor, he sees Calcutta in a state of decay. However, amidst the decay, he observes certain spots of regeneration in the cinema of Satyajit Ray and in the optimism of people like Debu. 'After the Battle' is Naipaul's documentation of the movement in the Indian social fabric that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. This movement marks intellectual confusion of the times when the old ideologies were set aside and a search was on for a new set of ideologies to live by. This coupled with economic crisis accentuated the confusion of those times.

VI.3.10 Response of Indian Muslims to Partition

The sixth chapter 'The End of the Line' contains the response of Indian Muslims to the partition of India. Naipaul begins with a discussion of Satyajit Ray's film, *The Chess Players*. Naipaul uses the film to comment on the decadent Muslim power in the nineteenth century and the annexation of Oude, which was part of Muslim India:

Lucknow was the end of the line for Muslim India ... In its historical heart it is like a graveyard from the days of the

Nawabs of Oude, full of the ruins of war. The city was shelled and fought over during the Mutiny; afterwards the British preserved the ruins as a memorial, and passed them on to independent India. (Naipaul, 1990, 410-411)

Naipaul meets Rashid, who, even after one hundred and thirty years, carries the scar of defeat at the hands of the British. Many middle – class Muslims had left for Pakistan and all who remained in Lucknow, once known as the epitome of Muslim culture, were people who were “vulnerable, withdrawn and highly strung”. (Naipaul, 1990, 413). With Rashid, Naipaul walks down the market and finds the practitioners of ancient crafts in a state of decadence. The embroiderers, the silver – foil makers, lived a life of squalor:

All the jobs here have this soul- destroying quality. They are doing because their fathers did it before them. (Naipaul, 1990, 420)

Rashid came from an old Shia Muslim family. His father had a successful photography business. His shops sold cameras and photographic equipments. This was in 1911. After independence, in 1947, Rashid's father wanted to shift to Pakistan along with his business. His own nephew who transferred the shop in his own name cheated him. Rashid's father stayed in India but decided to marry his daughter to a Pakistani Muslim. Rashid got his education at La Martiniere and grew up with two cultures: the secular culture at school and the religious at home. After his father's death, Rashid drifted in various ways. He went to England and worked in a Kentucky Fried Chicken shop. He went to Pakistan. But even Pakistan was disillusionment. Rashid could not belong to the aggressive business minded world of Indian Muslims in Pakistan. He felt stifled by the Islamic laws that had total monopoly over an individual's life. He returned to India for the scant sense of belonging it still had to offer.

Amir came from an aristocratic Muslim family. His father was a Raja. He wished to instill in his son the truest values of Islam. At the same time he wanted his son to have a modern education. Like Rashid, Amir also grew up with two cultures. His

father's oscillations between India, Pakistan, Iran and England kept him from being rooted. When his father declared his intention of accepting Pakistan citizenship the family suffered hardships in India. His father's failure to be integrated into the mainstream in Pakistan caused deeper confusion in Amir. His cultural upbringing and his study of astronomy complicated this confusion:

His political and religious passions had bequeathed many languages, many cultures, many modes of thought and emotion to his son. He had his son's ears pierced, to pledge him to the service of the faith.... But with that – his academic work in Cambridge and London had been in astronomy – Amir had also developed religious doubts. (Naipaul, 1990, 443-44)

Naipaul notes the violence caused to the Muslim psyche as a result of the partition of India. The Muslims, so far rooted in India were doubly displaced. In India, they strove to get away to a place that promised to reinstate their pride and position as rulers. In Pakistan they could not be integrated into the mainstream and were marginalized as *mohajirs*. This double exclusion is crystallized in Rashid's concluding remark:

That sense of belonging, which I had in India, I knew I couldn't find anywhere else. Yes I also know I can never be a complete person now. I can't ignore partition. It's a part of me. I feel rudderless... The creation and existence of Pakistan has damaged a part of my psyche. I simply cannot pretend that life goes on ... (Naipaul, 1990, 452)

Amidst the grim darkness of the worlds of Rashid and Amir, Naipaul discovers a small ray of hope. This ray of hope is Parveen, who represents those Muslims who have been integrated into the Indian social fabric, those Muslims who cherish no religious or cultural yearnings for Pakistan. Parveen came from a family of landlords and lawyers and entered active politics. She saw herself as Indian and blamed the Muslim unrest in India to ignorance and a lack of proper education and ignorance.

The chapter, on one hand discusses in finest detail the genesis and nature of the problem of alienation of Muslims in India. On the other hand, it also discusses the ways in which integration can be made possible. It seems that Naipaul's sympathy lies heavily with the gloomy despair of Rashid and Amir. But Parveen stands as a ray of hope. And with her stands the hope of the millions. Naipaul leaves the possibility open to Parveen. The chapter carries no concluding remarks from Naipaul.

VI.3.11 Emancipation of Women

The seventh chapter, 'Women's Era' shows the change that had come to the Indian woman's idea of herself and the role played by Vishwa Nath, the editor of women's magazine *Women's Era*. Naipaul begins with his own difficulties with Russell's *Diary*. Through his own example and Rashid's, Naipaul lays the groundwork for individual responses to literary work. On this groundwork he builds the Indian women's response to the women's magazines in India. He sees these magazines as being structured around the psychological needs of a changing population. According to Suvir Kaul

Naipaul reads women's magazines and is alerted to the way in which they play out the tensions between traditional conventions and alternative possibilities and thus call attention to the changing lives of women. (Mehrotra, 2003, 242)

Vishwa Nath, the editor of *Women's Era* was an iconoclast and a conventional man rolled into one. Through *Women's Era*, *Femina*, *Savvy* and *Eve's Weekly* Naipaul sees different kinds of women, with different sets of priorities and values. The paradox of Vishwa Nath's mind was the paradox of a vast majority of Indian women who were just entering the outside world for the first time. Therefore, *Women's Era* became the most popular women's magazine.

The striking note in the chapter is the gradual change in Naipaul's opinion of *Women's Era*. He lays out the whole process. Initially, he found *Women's Era* to be dull. The articles were in fact general instructions on the desired code of behavior on social

occasions or on health and fitness of the family. Later, Naipaul looks at its target audience and tries to pace the magazine in the indispensable informative role it played for its target audience. In this way Naipaul learns to look at the magazine with a new sense of admiration. Naipaul, in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, adopts this method throughout. The chapter 'Women's Era' shows the clearest working of Naipaul's new method. The chapter in a way summarizes the change in Naipaul's perspective from *An Area of Darkness* to *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. He begins with a rejection of *Women's Era*, goes on to analyze the magazine, its editor, and its target readers. He then arrives at a newfound admiration for the work being done by this magazine. It appears that the pattern of his coming to terms with India is replicated in his treatment of *Women's Era*.

VI.3.12 Sikh Insurgency

The second last chapter, 'The Shadow of the Guru' is a detailed analysis of the psychology of Sikh insurgency in India. He sees the Sikh militancy as a part of a larger process of awakening in India:

To awaken to history was to cease to live instinctively. It was to begin to see oneself and one's group the way the outside world saw one; it was to know a kind of rage.....There had been a general awakening. But everyone awakened first to his own group or communityevery group sought to separate from the rage of others. (Naipaul, 1990, 490)

Gurtej Singh is the main narrator in this chapter and it is through him that Naipaul explains how a realization of the Sikh identity mutated into insurgency. The origins of the Sikh faith were in militant action against Muslim oppression. The militant streak surfaced and got lost. In an earlier chapter Naipaul had described how the Naxalite movement had gone astray from its ideals and was lost. He repeats the same about Sikh insurgency in this chapter. The reader sees the movement in its various stages through the eyes of the people involved in it. The chapter alternates such

accounts with the stories of the Sikh Gurus that form a part of the collective consciousness of the people that narrate their stories.

Naipaul does not reject insurgency but sees it as a part of a larger process of change in the people's idea of themselves. Religious identity is the first step in people's idea of themselves and therefore the insurgency in Punjab started at the religious level. Naipaul has also exposed the break in the unified idea of religion that came to people like Buta Singh. The picture that emerges is that of strife as an outlet for pent up emotions of the past; militancy as a step towards the restoration of the past Sikh glory.

VI.3.13 Return to India

The last chapter is a return to India for Naipaul. In this chapter he discusses candidly the psychology behind his first impassioned rage in *An Area of Darkness*. Naipaul visits Kashmir, the hotel Liward and its inhabitants: Aziz and Mr. Butt. It was the same hotel where he stayed at the end of his sojourn in India in 1962. As a matter of coincidence, the same caretakers were looking after the hotel in 1962. Naipaul had an extensive talk with them at that time. However, after many years, Naipaul sees how Indian has changed and how his eye had changed over the past twenty – seven years. In places where Naipaul earlier observed decay of tradition, he now saw new creative beginnings. In the confusion of the immediate period after independence, he found a new sense of organization and he saw India on the move. He saw the socio – political disturbances and the failed attempts at revolution as a part of India's growth:

What the mutinies were also helping to define was the strength of the general intellectual life, and the wholeness and humanism of the values to which all Indians now felt they could appeal. And – strange irony – the mutinies were not to be wished away. They were a part of the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India's growth, and part of its restoration. (Naipaul, 1990, 604)

“In 1960 I was still a colonial, travelling to far –off paces...” (Naipaul, 1985, II). It was around this time that Naipaul was travelling in India for *An Area of Darkness*. His

views on India were therefore the views of a colonial. By the time he came to *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, he had ceased to be a colonial. He had arrived at the multiple perspectives offered by post – colonial vision. He had learnt to see India as India saw itself. This brought with it a sense of healing and a sense of homecoming for Naipaul.

India: A Million Mutinies Now is Naipaul's third and appears to be the final stage of the unraveling of the problematic relation between himself and India. This book recalls his earlier books on India and attempt a revision of his earlier judgments on India. The structure of *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Million Mutinies now* is similar. Both begin with a description of the crowds of Bombay but the difference in tone sets them apart. While *An Area of Darkness* ends in 'Flight,' an escape from the painful reality of India, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* in its last chapter declares a 'Return to India.' In *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, India is seen through the eyes of its various narrators. Naipaul, the writer, empathizes with them and thus arrives at a resting place for his overwhelming diasporic concerns for India.

VI.4 Resurgent lives of Women

It appears that the progression in the personal circumstance of people which Naipaul observes in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is closely linked with Naipaul's coming to terms with his diasporic status and in the process coming to terms with India. This is clearly represented in the changing perception of Indian women in his books on India. The portrayal of women in *An Area of Darkness* and in *India: A Wounded Civilization* appears to be off-hand and incidental. Women are shown to be a part of decaying system. They are capable of bringing about any major change in the world they inhabit. They are shown to have no understanding of the changing world around them. But with *India: A Million Mutinies Now* there comes a sharp change in Naipaul's perception. Women are portrayed against their socio-economic-political backgrounds and the change that has occurred through women is carefully brought out.

In *An Area of Darkness* Naipaul observes three classes of women in India: the poor, the working class and the higher class of rich. The poor are represented by the prostitutes of Bombay and their servants:

In the dim sinking corridors sat expressionless women, very old, very dirty, shriveled almost to futility...these were the sweepers, the servants of the gay girls of the Bombay poor. (Naipaul, 1964, 47)

Another glimpse of the poor sections of the society is in the businesslike beggar women on the local trains of Bombay:

The boy is maneuvered and propelled through the coach by the woman who weeps and whines and briskly, without acknowledgement, collects the small coins which the passengers, without looking up, hand to her. She does not pause to plead with those who don't give. (Naipaul, 1964, 68)

Naipaul talks of three women of the upper income group of which only one is a full length portrayal. All that one comes to know of Boxwallah Bunty's wife is that she has European complexion and manners. Mrs. M. Mehta, the secretary of *Women's League* also remains obscure. Mrs. Mahindra, the wife of a rich contractor is shown trying everything to adopt 'modern' ways. She is keen to furnish her house with 'foreign' things and speaks a strange variety of English: "I am craze for foreign...just craze for foreign". (Naipaul, 1964, 85). She is enthusiastic about her role as a housewife and is enterprising in her own way. However, with the arrival of her father-in-law she quickly loses all her enthusiasm and regresses into her traditional role: "In no time at all she had dwindled into the Indian daughter-in-law. We heard little now of her craze for foreign" (Naipaul, 1964, 89)

In *India: A Wounded Civilization* Naipaul makes repeated references to Mrs. Gandhi but these are more political in content than social and hence offer no glimpse of the changes that are occurring in the social fabric of resurgent India. In rural India Naipaul meets the power-wielding Patel whose daughter-in-law is a graduate. One

doesn't come to know if this graduation has empowered her in some way but she, being a graduate had definitely added glamour to Patel's power.

Patel...was too grand to boast her attainments. That he could leave to others, his admirers and hangers on. And others did pass the news of daughter-in-law of this wealthy man. (Naipaul, 1977, 82)

The Indian wife of young foreign academic and her friend are very curiously sketched. The wife of the foreign academic is as blind to the changes taking place in India as her husband: "Her Indian blindness to India with its roots in caste and religion was like his foreigner's easy disregard" (Naipaul, 1977, 117). This is replicated in the blindness of her friend towards the poor of the city she lives in:

The women of Bombay, she said... wore a certain kind of saree...the men wore a special kind of turban...she had lived in Bombay; but already she was wrong... in Bombay, for the most part, men wore trousers and shirts (Naipaul, 1977, 117-118)

Helplessness and sadness that falls to the share of women is shown through the daughter of the cloth merchant who, unable to cope with the mental agony inflicted on her by her husband and her in-laws commits suicide: "She suffered specially when she was not allowed visit her sister in hospital....cyanide was detected in the viscera of the dead girl.... (Naipaul, 1977, 133). Irrespective of class Naipaul shows women shackled to set her notions of caste and religion. Jamnadas Bajaj's rich widow who followed Gandhi is blind for all that he stood for. In spite of her loyalty to Gandhi she has not been able to break out of her idea of caste and religion: "I never eat anything I haven't prepared with my own hands. Everyone knows that Moslems and Harijan's have dirty hands. (Naipaul, 1977, 156).

It seems that women in *An Area of Darkness* and in *India: A Wounded Civilization* are shown as deeply rooted in old beliefs and customs: they are powerless against the demands of caste and society. Naipaul has shown no progression, no resurgence in his portrayal of women in *An Area of Darkness* and in *India: A Wounded Civilization*. In fact

Naipaul shows them as more retrograde than they actually were. This attitude undergoes a total change in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. In this book he observes Indian women not as entities in isolation but as harbingers of change that has gradually come to India.

Naipaul's first statement is made on the cover jacket itself, which shows that the woman is moving and she is moving with her children. There is no one to see her off; she looks ahead as the baby suckles at her breast, waiting for the two young boys to move with her belongings. She is tired but the determination writ all over her face cannot be missed.

The picture leaves numerous questions in its wake: Where is she? What is she looking at? Will the boys be able to carry her belongings? What are the things she wants to carry with her? Why is she alone? The answers to all these questions come from this non-fiction work. Perhaps the story of the woman is the fabric on which Naipaul has presented his picture gallery. He has also shown that it is this fabric that is shred when "million mutinies" break out.

The first section titled 'Bombay Theatre' presents a cross section of the urban middle class women in metropolitan Bombay. These women are sometimes seen, sometimes heard and sometimes felt by their very absence. Mr. Patil's and Mr. Namdeo Dhasal's mothers are elderly women whose entire existence contained in their role of wife and mother. Mr. Patil's mother is proud of her son's achievements and did not want to intrude into any of the "serious business her son might have to deal with" (Naipaul, 1990, 21). Her greatest ambition was "to bring the Ganpati image home from the image-maker's with a musical band" (Naipaul, 1990, 25). Having been able to do that she considered herself and her son blessed. Namdeo Dhasal's mother had suffered much and had a breakdown. She moved around the house shadow-like, silent. Their journey was nearing to its end.

The second generation of women like Mrs. Raote, Mrs. Ghate and her sister-in-law are different from them. Unlike their mother, they are educated and had chosen their spouses. Their 'love marriage' and education has given them a greater say in the

family matters. Mrs. Raote is a working woman. Her sister-in-law is a doctor. Mrs. Ghate stayed at home but did not succumb to her husband's ideologies. In spite of her husband's disinterest in religion, she kept a puja-box in the kitchen. Her sister-in-law is educated and has a career, and has married facing a lot of opposition. These women have realized the need for financial independence. Though these are still sacrificing, they have begun to explore themselves. Mrs. Ghate's puja-box bears the testimony to that.

It appears that Mallika, Namdeo Dhasal's wife, represents the third generation woman. Mallika knows herself, her potential. She seeks and expects more from her marriage than what Mr. Patil's mother or Mrs. Raote ever did. She is a poet and she marries a poet in Namdeo. She marries him because he called her 'comrade', he gave her the 'red salaam'. (Naipaul, 1990, 123) She could never fit into the role of shock absorber that Namdeo assigned to her after their marriage. She thinks that she writes what she thinks. Her autobiography *I Want to Destroy Myself* screams: "Male ego is the most hideous thing in our present society. Woman finds quite a pleasure in boasting it...I do not believe that for anybody called Namdeo I should surrender my entire life" (Naipaul, 1990, 127). It seems that her conflict arises out of the clash between her clear perception of the failure of her marriage and her love for Namdeo. Her "obsession with the man and his poetry and his cause" had made her lose her freedom. (Naipaul, 1990, 127) Like so many women caught in similar situation, Mallika will not be able to make a choice between love and freedom. But the process of self-assertion has certainly begun. Mallika has her views on the law too and believes that "a mother should have a right to her child" (Naipaul, 1990, 127). She is afraid that even if she leaves Namdeo, he would get the custody of their son once he was past seven. The fear of losing her son along with her love keeps her from seeking divorce. The landmark to be noted here is the realization of conflict, which was altogether absent earlier. The hope lies in Mallika's dream of bringing up the child to grow up like his father-the negative aspects" (Naipaul, 1990, 126) With Mallika's story the visit to 'Bombay Theatre' comes to an end. The reader has viewed the contemporary Indian woman in the numerous roles that she appears in on the stage of life.

'The Secretary's Tale' with its 'Glimpses of the Indian Century' takes a long look backward. In Rajan's story we meet his mothers. Rajan's father, a Bramhin, was a widower thrice. "He lost his first wife, and then he married a second time, so that this second wife could look after his first two children. When his second wife died, leaving in turn two or three children, he was forced by his relations to marry a third time. In those days such marriages were not difficult" (Naipaul, 1990, 144). On his third wedding, Rajan's father was forty-three and his mother eighteen. She died eleven years later at the age of twenty-nine; her stepdaughter had nowhere to go when she was deserted by her husband. In spite of their helplessness these women managed to pass on a perspective very different from his father. On being told at an interview that he ought not to have left Calcutta and "should have stayed at least for the nostalgia-like women there", Rajan "told off one of the interviewers" even at the risk of being rejected for the job. He felt it "too degrading to women". (Naipaul, 1990, 153) When he married in 1985, his was a civil marriage-no dowry, no give and take. His wife was a simple, independent woman. In the professional sphere, Rajan says he hadn't risen beyond what his father and grandfather could rise to at the beginning of the century, but as a sensitized human being he has certainly made a huge leap across the century.

"Breaking Out" seems to be the emergence of the Indian woman from the shackles of the ignorance and suppression. It is the mapping out of the journey of her evolution. Scientist Subramaniam's grandmother "divided the world into three parts: *Raja seemay*-the Mysore state, *Kampany seemay*-the Company's Land; and beyond these two areas was the rest of the world" (Naipaul, 1990, 178) In such a world was born Kala's grandmother. Married at eleven, she wasn't very different from Subramaniam's grandmother but her daughter studied till class ten and dreamt of being a doctor. Her dreams and her taste for a more fulfilling life cost her marital happiness. She turned into a 'chattel'. "She had no time for herself...she could make no decisions...somebody always decided for her" (Naipaul, 1990, 207-208). She bore physical and mental abuse. She was never able to break free but she taught her daughter Kala "how important education and financial independence are" (Naipaul, 1990, 210). As a result Kala was in a position to make her own life, she had her job: she

was free to come and go. Naipaul sees in Kala's story a very positive "historical progression" which she herself is not conscious of. This is true of the Indian woman too. She has been 'breaking out' slowly, through generations. The possibilities available to the Indian woman today could never have been dreamt of by their grandmothers. With more and more women breaking out, subsequently, little wars were bound to follow according to Naipaul. These wars occurred at different levels and mainly centered between the many selves of the Indian women.

The social structure that these women had broken came back to haunt them. Manyammai left her home in opposition to marriage and continued with her teacher-training course. She later married Periyar who had founded the Self-Respect campaign and campaigned, amongst other things, against disabilities of women. She managed the campaign till her death. Mrs. Veermani, in spite of her "traditional and demuer and self-effacing" manner was a dutiful server of the Self-Respect cause. (Naipaul, 1990, 318)

'Little Wars' were also fought by the menstruating women and girls who were segregated during their periods in a special room in a corner of Kakasthan's Bramhin colony. In spite of their so called "polluting" effects, they went out to work through the "wicket gate at the back of the colony and dared pollute the men's world by their presence". (Naipaul, 1990, 289) In Sugar's story we hear of middle-class Bramhin ladies who opt for jobs and stay unmarried rather than push their fathers to bankruptcy to arrange for their marriages. They do not see marriage as a goal.

Emerging 'After the Battle' is Chidananda's wife, a discerning woman who dissuades her husband from taking up an up market job, as it would turn them into "a different kind of people"(Naipaul, 1990, 341). Torn between his 'Jekyll and Hyde' existences, Chidananda experiences deep anguish in bringing together the westernized lifestyle demanded by his job and the cultural yearnings of his soul. Finally, deeply disgusted, he says to himself what his wife had warned him of in the beginning. "What I have dine to myself" (Naipaul, 1990, 341)

Arati, a schoolteacher, went through her battle in her family's opposition to her marriage to Dipanjan. Although she had been sympathetic to the Naxalite cause in the

beginning, she thought it foolish to take the revolution to the people. "The poor in India believed in their fate....that....had set the revolution back by 40 years" (Naipaul, 1990, 370). The position of women in England had further shaken her up... "given the choice, she would have continued to live in England—his feeling of freedom, and recognition of her as an individual" (Naipaul, 1990, 371). Another product of 'Little Wars' is Ashok who found the matrimonial preliminaries of "bride-seeing" humiliating and very disturbing. He was troubled as "the girl had apparently no say in the matter...everybody was waiting....on these occasions it's all weighted in favour of the boy, and the girl's family occupies the inferior position" (Naipaul, 1990, 385). He said no to the process. Later, he found solace in a self-choice marriage. At the 'End of Line' we have in Parveen, the Indian woman breaking through and confident with her ambition of entering "secular" politics, she knows exactly where she is going. (Naipaul, 1990, 424)

'Women's Era' begins with Naipaul's first encounter with Russel's *Diary* and the different griefs it inspired in Rashid and in him. It questions the authenticity of documented history that assumes without question a sequence of events built around the ascendancy of men. This is Naipaul's prelude to a chapter, which deals with the life of Indian women and its projection in various women's magazines. In his meetings with the editors of women's magazines he discovers the tough life of the urban lower-middle class earning woman members of a family:

...she's up at the crack of dawn...to fill the water for the day...does the morning chores, filling the tiffin-carriers for husband and children after giving them tea, breakfast..then she is off to work herself. A very long train journey...she hardly gets a seat...She gets off from her office at 5.30 or six...Before getting to the bus or station she would buy her vegetables or whatever she needs...Then the dinner, then a bit of children's homework..Then she has to think of water again. (Naipaul, 1990, 473-474)

Naipaul's encounters with *Femina*, *Eve's Weekly*, *Savvy*, and *Women's Era* lead him to the same question with which he began. Who writes for whom? And with what authority? Are these magazines actually addressing the women? Who is their target audience? Here, once again, Naipaul comes across the extreme heterogeneity within womanhood. "*Femina* is for the older woman. *Savvy* is for the city bred women, from eighteen to thirty" (Naipaul, 1990, 477) *Eve's Weekly* is unconventional in its outlook as compared to *Women's Era*. If readership is indicator of effective communication *Women's Era* with its highest readership tops the list. Its editor is Vishwa Nath—a man who holds iconoclastic views on religion but is strangely conventional, even stereotyped in his concern for the role of the woman in the family. Probably the ambiguity of the editor's personality struck a concordant note with the doubts and confusions of women just emerging from their shells. What to hold on to? What to let go? What to strive for? What to fight against?—Plagued by these questions and caught in the whirlwind of change, taking cautious little steps, it seems that these women found comfort in *Women's Era* because it "did not intimidate its readers...it acknowledged the conditions in which its readers lived; and it never went beyond those conditions..With that recognition, there was always reassurance. (Naipaul, 1990, 479-480) It told its readers how to conduct themselves at formal dinners, how to write a letter, how to entertain guests, and all this in a tone that was "one of concern, almost love". The paradox regarding women and their world which can be easily understood as coming from a male editor trapped in his own ambiguous vision was well accepted by women caught within similar visions of themselves and their worlds. "Offering instruction and reassurance, and a subtle transformation of the hard real world, to women just emerging, whose lives were a tissue of ritual and given relationships, and didn't want to rebel or dream" (Naipaul, 1990, 489). It gave them an honest woman's view of herself and so women could easily relate with it.

It seems that from this point women had started acknowledging their existence and had begun to expand their 'space'. It is from here that they later dared to rebel and dared to dream. It is in its wings that a thousand Nandinis and kalas still wait to make their entries. What Naipaul says of India is also true of the Indian women. If the

“twentieth century restoration of India to itself had taken time”, it would take time for women to be restored to themselves. The transition cannot be a very smooth one. Kala's mothers will have to go through oppression, Mallikas will have to be stifled before there can emerge a Kala. The harrowing experiences of womanhood and the struggle are not to be “wished away...They were a part of the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India's growth, part of its restoration”. (Naipaul, 1990, 603)

This brings Naipaul to the end of his book and as the reader closes its cover, one knows the answers to all those questions, which had struck one in the beginning. Perhaps the woman on the cover is the Indian woman just emerging from her grandmother's role, looking at nothing, looking through everything, looking within herself for reassurance. She is travelling to get her personhood. The boys, her children, will carry her belongings: like Ashok and Kala. Mallika's son at her breast will not grow up to be like his father. The woman is alone because she has to make this journey herself. No one else can make it for her.

In this way Naipaul has perceived Indian women negotiating change in their situation. He has presented them in relation to the individual capacities within which women have begun to act. A woman who may appear totally powerless as a part of the entire social set up is not so at all places and at all times.

VI.5 Critical Analysis

It is evident that Naipaul's third book of Indian travels, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), is written with his earlier Indian books in mind and seems to be another revision, another re-seeing of what had possibly been wrongly judged in the past. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is populated, filled with the voices of a wide variety of people who are allowed to speak for themselves without much authorial commentary. Opinions, views, possible solutions are allowed to clash. The interest is more in what has created such voices than in imposing an order. Where Naipaul formerly sought a tradition but found decay and chaos, he has come to accept that life consists of change and to find interest in the ways that people strive to change their lives for the better. In the twenty-seven years between his first visit to India and this one, it seems that

Naipaul and the India he observes have changed in analogous ways. They have changed from the confusions that accompanied independence to the many voices and perspectives of the postcolonial. In 1962 Naipaul was still humiliated by his colonial past in Trinidad, a humiliation that he blamed on India, where notions of greatness had been lost among pettiness.

In the earlier trips to India, Naipaul remained an islander, used to a small and manageable space, always horrified and flabbergasted by the vast, seemingly endless space of India. As an islander, size fascinated him. Seeing a wide river or a high mountain or taking a long train journey always excited him. The actual encounter, however, in spite of the inner enthusiasm was a catastrophe. This is what drove him to say in *The Overcrowded Barracoon*, "Perhaps it is this, this vastness which no one can ever get to know: India as an ache, for which one has a great tenderness but from which at length one always wishes to separate oneself" (Naipaul, 1972, 46). This spatial fear may have induced the calm and tranquility he felt in the "small and manageable" size of the Liward Hotel in Kashmir which relieved him of "all those poor fields and stunted animals and the exhausted plundered land" (Cronin, 1989, 45).

In *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul described the state of Karnataka as a backward region suffering from human deficiency (Naipaul, 1977, 8). Yet the potential of the people of the region clearly disproves Naipaul's claim. Furthermore, he has always been against the kind of social mobility that appears in postcolonial India. He resented the empowering impetus that allows people on the margins of society access to power. In the other essays published in the seventies, Naipaul rejects the marginal's' participation in the political process. In his third Indian travelogue, Naipaul goes again to Karnataka and stays some time with Prakash, a village boy who is a lawyer by training and a minister in the non-Congress government. The transformed Naipaul notices the vast economic and cultural changes in the region he labeled backward thirty years ago: "The state of Karnataka itself was a new creation, post-British, post-Independence, a linguistic state, answering the new pride, the new sense of self, that the national movement had fostered" (Naipaul, 1990, 144). He cheerfully observes the economic prosperity of the people in Karnataka. The well-tended fields, the village

houses, that are often neat, and the increased supply of food all testify to the agricultural revolution. Ultimately, he is able to see the humane side of the picture that had remained hidden to him in the past (Naipaul, 1990, 149).

Hundreds of thousands of people all over India, perhaps millions of people, had worked for these for four decades, in the best way: very few of them with an idea of drama or sacrifice or mission, nearly all of them simply doing jobs.

In *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul devoted a whole chapter to Mahatma Gandhi, "Not Ideas, but Obsessions" in which he scourged his religious side. In that work, Naipaul's construction of Gandhi was quite negative. To him Gandhi's sweeping influence across India was doomed because there was no ideology to support and concretize Gandhi's message. To legitimate his claim Naipaul quoted Tolstoy: "His Hindu nationalism spoils everything" (Naipaul, 1977, 168). Hence, what is left is a cultural primitivism that breeds spirituality and sanctifies poverty and parasitism (Naipaul, 1977, 181). He now has a very different opinion of Gandhi. In an interview in 1990, he speaks movingly and passionately about Gandhi: "I adore him. I've always adored him. He is a fabulous man.... He is a man whose life, when I contemplate it, makes me cry; I am moved to tears". (Robinson, 1990, 22) Naipaul's broadened vision, largely informed by his furthered rational vision, has enabled him to see the dynamism in the making that remained hidden in his previous unilateral engagements with India. This is the serendipitous rediscovering of Gandhi's dream of India's progress. An "area of darkness" changed into an "area of progress"!

At this juncture Naipaul tilts towards a creative, humane reading of the particular, the local. He is more appreciative of the broad changes in Indian economy, culture and politics. In the past he repeatedly attacked the Independence movement as futile, inefficient, and untimely. Naipaul has become aware of the inner rationality of India, the liberating impulse of the Independence movement that has resulted in "a free press, a constitution, a concern for law and institutions, ideas of morality, good behavior and intellectual responsibility..." (Naipaul, 1990, 423). In *India: A Wounded Civilization* he claimed that Indians suffer from a "defective vision", that Gandhi had pulled India from one kal yug (Black Age) and pushed it back into another. Now he

praises the vision of the leaders of the independence movement: "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 India" (Naipaul, 1990, 289).

The current state of affairs in India is reassuring, because to him India is set on the path of new intellectual life and progress. His concern for human agency through several conversations with Indian intellectuals, scientists, poets becomes more solidified. He believes now that "the freedom movement reflected all of this and turned out to be the truest kind of liberation" (Naipaul, 1990, 157). Naipaul celebrates the hybrid nature of reform movements such as Brahma Arya samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohun Roy which as Naipaul puts it boldly, is a synthesis of "the new learning of Britain and Europe with the old speculative Hindu faith of the Vedas and the Upanishads" (Naipaul, 1990, 186). After all, the Hinduism that Naipaul claimed had reached a dead end in the ruins of Vijayanagar as it had stood the test of time and offered the potential to produce fresh opportunities for change. He values the leadership of men of large vision like Roy and Tagore who had sown the seeds of the Independence movement. Furthermore, Naipaul praises the social mobility that had become part of India. He can see that the effects of the Independence movement had trickled their way down. This is the point that, as he puts it, he hadn't understood, or had taken for granted before (Naipaul, 1990, 517). Naipaul now tries to reach a deeper understanding of India that goes beyond mere economic considerations. In the interview from which I have already quoted, he voices concern for the subaltern masses, "people who haven't had a voice..." (Robinson, 1990, 21)

Naipaul's relations with India have become less problematic than in the past. In *India: A Wounded Civilization* he ambivalently foreshadowed what lay ahead in the future. He saw the possibility of the emergence of "mind" in India, after a long spiritual night. To him the problem did not rest with the economy or with a military dictatorship: "These are only aspects of the larger crisis, which is that of a decaying civilization, where the only hope lies in further swift decay" (Naipaul, 1977, 191). However, in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* further swift decay as the only hope has been transformed into the restorative power of the mutinies as a natural outcome of the

reaction to layer above layer of distress and cruelty. Therefore, mutinies can be the harbingers of restoration and reconstruction of Indian subjectivities and of India itself. That's why he has named the book "mutinies". He wants mutinies to happen because they are, to him, "the beginnings of an intellectual life, already negated by old anarchy and disorder" (Naipaul, 1991, 518). Hence, a mutiny is distinct from anarchy and disorder. It is a consequence of the liberating dynamics of mutinies which Naipaul himself endorses:

And—strange irony—the mutinies were not to be wished away. They were part of the beginning of a new way for many millions, part of India's growth, part of its restoration. (Naipaul, 1990, 518).

After twenty-seven years, Naipaul's return journey proves to be a positive experience. Now, he is able to shed his Indian nerves and abolish the darkness that separated him from his ancestral homeland. The man who always ridiculed any instance of collective action in the post colony now takes great interest in the social dynamics of "millions" on the move in the subcontinent. The third journey to India enables Naipaul to move from a sensibility of ruin to one of critical reconstruction and negotiation. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is a clear demonstration of Naipaul's change of attitude towards India. This change of attitude mainly arises out of his epistemological repositioning as well as a different personal relationship with India. He appreciates the creative agency of great Indian reformers such as Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahathma Gandhi, and discusses their role in the formation of the Independence movement. By the same token he sees the agency people of India in a new light. They are not the people resigned to the Hindu belief based on the impermanency of the world. They are now agents of progress, industrialization, pushing beyond their former status. Shiva, it seems, has once again begun to dance in India

According to him, for centuries foreigners had conquered and ruled India because of its own internal weaknesses. What had been one of the world's great civilizations stopped developing, became backward, inward, fragmented, ready for

conquest, its people superstitious, passive, and impoverished, sent abroad as indentured labour. In 1962, seeking to find his cultural home in India, he discovered he was not part of the family he imagined, he did not belong to the local clans, he did not have the local vision.

Instead of national independence, bringing renewal, he found poverty, feudal caste attitudes, fatalism, and lack of rationality and a failure of vision. Returning to India during a time when others fear the collapse of the Indian central state because of regional, caste and religious conflicts, Naipaul finds signs of vitality and renewal. There is now a new wealth, a new national economy controlled by Indians and not by foreigners. Many people are prosperous and others can hope to improve their condition. Notions of freedom and self-assertion have moved from the elite to a broader range of society. A notion of India has been restored, after having been lost for centuries and it is this sense of identity which is being challenged by further claims for recognition. Naipaul sees such renewal as beginning with the peace the British had imposed on India after the mutiny of 1857. Until then the country was the victim of repeated Muslim invasions and was divided among various groups who, because of local politics, had taken sides with foreign invaders. British rule brought unity and began a period of scholarship which reconstructed a sense of national identity, led to the nationalist movement and independence. Notions of freedom continued to develop and, supported by recent economic changes, created the energy and demands for recognition that characterize the present. An older generation of nationalists needed to find a usable past and folk tradition which they asserted against the culture of their colonizers; but such traditionalism became reactionary, even an absurd humiliation, after independence. Bruce King says:

Naipaul's continuing exploration of the paradoxes of freedom is both more suitable for the postcolonial world and a further stage in the process of decolonization. In his recognition of how British imperialism made possible the creation of a modern India we might find a clue about how to see the role of European imperial history, the Western canon of literature and

the place of European ideas in contemporary multicultural societies. (King, 2003, 171)

It seems that Naipaul's writing has moved with our era from the confusions of decolonization, with its suspicions, humiliations, and continuing dependency, to what is often termed the postcolonial, which for him is a joyful acceptance of the energies, cultural achievements, conflicting claims and freedoms that have resulted from independence along with the increased wealth, transportation and communication of recent decades. Although Naipaul's writings are a record and analysis of such changes there is a subtext – the soil from which they have been nourished is himself.

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