Chapter-VI

Conclusion
V. S. Naipaul’s works continue to be entirely committed to his own idea of the world and his writings deal with his personal experiences. Naipaul was born and brought up in Caribbean with an extremely admired vision of India. Even though, he could not understand much about Hindu rules and customs of Caribbean. Naipaul observed a gap between the two worlds in which he lived as he grew- one was the colonial world of Caribbean and another was his old ancestral world rooted in India. Naipaul revealed his own experiences about India in his travel narratives and gradually, his idea of India has been changed. This evolution has been discussed in the thesis.

In 1964, V.S. Naipaul authored the book *An Area of Darkness*, a travelogue detailing his trip through India in the early sixties. It was the first amongst Naipaul's globally recognized Indian trilogy which includes *India: A Wounded Civilization* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. In this novel, Naipaul conveyed his experiences in India over a span of one year. The novel has given Naipaul a channel
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to convey his disappointments with India; he discloses the incidents occurred en route. *An Area of Darkness* is full of Naipaul's own comments and reactions. One can observe the predominance of 'I' in *An Area of Darkness* but, *India: A Wounded Civilization* changes this. Unlike, *An Area of Darkness*, the text is analytical rather than personal. Naipaul describes what he sees with his eyes rather than what strikes his heart. The fashion and language was also modified accordingly. The classic of modern travel writing, *An Area of Darkness*, is V.S. Naipaul's insightful reckoning with his ancestral homeland and an extraordinarily discerning chronicle of his first encounter with India. *An Area of Darkness* is an intense pessimistic work in which Naipaul has emphasized the bad parts of the given situation. The novel is abounding by explanatory passages which helped Naipaul delineate his core subject matter. Naipaul's first visit to India was highly disappointing. It communicates the acute sense of disgruntlement which the author experienced on his very first visit to his native place. Naipaul's travel narratives appear to have unscientific perspective. True to his style, the travelogue is anecdotal and descriptive. *An Area of Darkness* is part autobiography and part travel genre. This novel is V.S. Naipaul's semi-autobiographical account - at once painful and hilarious, always concerned - of his
first visit to India, the land of his forbears. It was his very first encounter with India, his real native place. India, so far, was just an idea for him which he had inherited in Trinidad. When Naipaul encountered India, he had to face the reality of India, its distress and pain affected him more strongly than its newly won independence.

*An Area of Darkness* is an account of his personal experiences and disappointments. Dominant nationalistic spirit of those times escaped from his perception. Naipaul always remained conscious about his relations with Indian soil and ultimately it was transformed into an urge of escape. At the very first stage of this book, it depicts the growth of a writer who is in search of his own identity. Naipaul has highlighted the areas in the book which created chaos in him. He has highlighted the areas of pain of futile imitation and degeneration.

*An Area of Darkness* shows his perplexity, his rage and his inability to comprehend the India that meets his eye or its relation to the India of Trinidad. Some features of Naipaul’s sensibility were overlooked amidst the volatile response generated by *An Area of Darkness*. These features cover the areas wherein Naipaul experienced genuine concern for all that was innocent and uncorrupted in India. The critics and readers largely overlooked such responses which are scattered in the book. These areas are the genesis ground for
Naipaul's recurrent concerns with India. Naipaul's books on India needs a double discernment. He is to be read in relation to his search of his nationhood and his world vision which has acquainted him to look for fissures and lacunae in societies and sensibilities. Before arriving in India, he had already evolved his own method of literary exposition of the predicament of the world. His method was that of scathing critique, which he adopted in *An Area of Darkness*. Also at work in *An Area of Darkness* was the confirmation of his own rootlessness. He could never attach himself with Trinidad as he was made to believe that his roots lay far off in India. The first book was very personal book. Sometimes, Naipaul imagined India as a land from a fairy tale. He wanted to overcome from the reality which he had never expected. Naipaul's grandfather never told him the stories of poverty in India. His grandfather never mentioned about the reason why he had to indenture himself, he portrayed India as golden land. Naipaul's grandmother's house in Trinidad did not carry the sign of indentured past. This kind of selective amnesia is not uncommon in communities living in exile. Naipaul inherited it. This is the major reason behind the confused response to India in *An Area of Darkness*. Naipaul has raised certain major issues in the book which need to pay attention such as poverty, caste system and
colonialism etc. India is an underdeveloped country only because of the poverty and caste system which has been prevailing in India since long time. Naipaul termed caste system as a brutal division of labour. He has depicted the examples of extreme poverty in the book and called India the poorest country in the world. Naipaul also spoke a good deal about the caste system prevailing in India. He mentioned about Gandhi that how he worked for the people of lower caste to give them a proper place in the society but at the same time, he also says that Gandhi failed to put his message across. A considerable section of novel is given to depict ill effects of colonialism on the country. Naipaul tried to draw a comparison between the bad effects of colonialism on India and Trinidad. Overall, the impression given in this book of colonialism in India is extremely negative. At the conclusion of the book, Naipaul admits:

“...It was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life into two. ‘Write me as soon as you get to Europe,’ an Indian friend had said. ‘I want your freshest impressions.’ I forget now what I wrote. It was violent and incoherent; but, like everything I wrote about India, it exorcized nothing.”

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In 1975, at the height of Indira Gandhi's 'Emergency', V. S. Naipaul returned to India, the country his ancestors had left one hundred years earlier. Out of that journey he produced this concise masterpiece: a vibrant, defiantly unsentimental portrait of a society traumatized by centuries of foreign conquest and immured in a mythic vision of its past. This vivid and unsentimental cultural portrait draws together conversations with Indians, news reports, politics and literature, paying particular attention to the Hindu confrontation with the West. Drawing on novels, news reports, political memoirs, and his own encounters with ordinary Indians, from a supercilious prince to an engineer constructing housing for Bombay's homeless, Naipaul captures a vast, mysterious, and agonized continent inaccessible to foreigners and barely visible to its own people. He sees both the burgeoning space program and the 5,000 volunteers chanting mantras to purify a defiled temple; the feudal village autocrat and the Naxalite revolutionaries who combined Maoist rhetoric with ritual murder. Relentless in its vision, thrilling in the keenness of its prose, *India: A Wounded Civilization* is a work of astonishing insight and candour. In Bombay Naipaul asks to see the chawls, the shanties and slums of the city and writes about the order and small benefits that the organisation of the
nascent Shiv Sena has brought to the sanitation and, marginally, to
the health and well-being of these filthy and neglected warrens
overpopulated by the influx of villagers into the city. It's 1977 and
the Shiv Sena, a novel political movement, restricted to Maharashtra,
has hit upon the idea of organising this neglected, all too visible
mass of the cities, these people who have been driven by destitution
to the metropoles and haven't the attributes which will municipalise
them. They may even be a majority in the city, but they are non-
people in its civic life. The Sena sets out to organise and win them.
Its patron saint is Shivaji. The Sena's methods of disciplining and
drilling are not far removed from those of popular militant
movement in Europe with mystical philosophies and nascent
grudges substituted for ideology. Their leader has been known to
express an admiration for Hitler. The Sena are labelled 'fascist' by
the liberals and the left. Naipaul's second book on India, India: A
Wounded Civilisation stands base to another stage in the progression
of his engagement with India. Here, Naipaul showed the problems
which India was facing after independence. Naipaul identifies one
major cause that is at the root of all maladies that ail India: a deep
rupture was caused in the people's idea of themselves by repeated
invasions and conquests. A systematic destruction of traditional
knowledge and talent has taken place after the arrival of the British raj, the sensibilities of people has broken down. Traditional skills and talent were wiped out. India could not produce the talent and skill that it had possessed in the past. Naipaul not only criticizes the foreign rule but he goes further to ascertain the causes that were responsible for India's predicament and comes up with the following conclusions. Indians does not know the real meaning of nationhood because India has so far only known a series of rulers in the past. Gandhi taught the lesson of unity to the people of India by raising the concept of dharma. He taught the new meaning of sacrifice and social service in such a way that the struggle of independence overcomes the issues of caste and class. The struggle of people won independence but the concept of self-governance could not reach the masses. The people who had won independence now returned to their own personal lives and interests. People followed Gandhi but the Gandhianism was more like a ritual, the ideology behind it was lost. Indian leadership was working on old British patterns. But, Naipaul did take into account the developments also. He also observes the changes taken place in the standard of living of the people after independence. By giving the landless poor an alternative to their unending indebtedness and poverty, the industries created
people who had a new sense of the self and a new morality. This movement laid the foundation of Naipaul’s hope for the regeneration of India.

As the name suggests, it is a critical assessment of certain features of Indian civilization: the brutal caste system, the sightless devotion to prehistoric and ambiguous religious rituals and practices, cultural, political, technological, and economic stagnation, corruption and laziness at all levels - all of which interact to keep it a backward, third-world country; at least according to Naipaul, who is, after all, Indian.

In India: A Wounded Civilisation, the confused response to India depicted in An Area of Darkness has changed to a great extent. It is the result of Naipaul's declaration in An Area of Darkness that he did not want India to sink. The analysis of the problems of India depicted in India: A wounded civilisation attempts not only to condemn the devastating enterprise of India's conquerors but also to create a feeling that all is not over yet. That India will continue on the path of growth and development if certain things are rectified. Actually, he was not trying to protect India but he was protecting the
idea of India that *An Area of Darkness* had threatened to take away.

At the end of the book, Naipaul admits:

"The stability of Gandhian India was an illusion; and India will not be stable again for a long time. But in the present uncertainty and emptiness there is the possibility of a true new beginning, of the emergence in India of mind, after the long spiritual night."²

Among the three books Naipaul has written on India (Area Of Darkness, A Wounded Civilisation and third, A Million Mutinies Now), A Wounded Civilisation has to be the most scathing of them all. While the other two are travelogues in nature, A Wounded Civilisation is more of a critique - an analysis.

It's really complex to soak up the whole lot he says in one reading because the book is so intellectual in nature, - this most definitely necessitates to be revisited to scrutinize clearly the various points the author raises.

As expected, it's the pessimistic, brutal side of Naipaul one gets to see, divulging India for all that troubles it. Unsurprisingly, he doesn’t give the country the due space.

The book was written after the Emergency (1975) got over and Naipaul makes a influential disagreement about how the country's
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political collapse is really the least of its concerns. He makes a case for how the Hindi way of life (with its customs, beliefs, myths, mysticism and orthodoxy) prevents the country from ever shedding the burden of its past and idea of the 'self'. He is of the opinion that this has crippled Indians and their academic capacities, leading to them seeing everything from the prism of their own restricted mental scope. The spirit of science and enquiry cannot exist amidst such primitivism, he says.

Naipaul uses his favourite writer R K Narayan's works to investigate into the deep-rooted mental and attitudinal problems from which India itself suffers.

He's critical about some aspects about Gandhism and how its result was the deification of poverty itself. Naipaul is especially critical of avid Gandhian Vinoba Bhave, who he says, created a useless archaic model of Gandhi's legacy.

Third book depicting the Naipaul's diasporic concerns is *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. The book presents various pictures of India. Naipaul, in this book, analysed and explained his own responses which he had written in his earlier two books. Naipaul has examined India at those places where regeneration and development
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has begun. In this way, Naipaul traces the process of development. Naipaul has portrayed various characters in the capacity in which they had contributed to the regeneration and growth. Naipaul also mentioned about the growth in the lives of Indian women. He has consciously observed the womanhood in various forms and also the subtle ways in which it has begun to assert itself. He has also illustrated about the problems of working woman in India who has to bear double burden of home as well as work front also. Naipaul has given way to a chain of voices that proclaim that India is growing and moving towards becoming a developed country. He has kept his own voice silent to the first and last few pages of the book. Through this book Naipaul has attempted to establish the long lost link with India Therefore, India: A Million Mutinies Now is very different from his first two books. He was now attached to India as an insider. He can stand and look beyond which falls in front of his eyes. The whole unconscious working of the diasporic concerns is spread throughout the Naipaul’s work and remarks on India. In India: A Million Mutinies, he admits that the major reason behind his responses was his own deficient ability to understand. Naipaul wrote:

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

“This is a beautifully written, intellectually satisfying account of the huge complexity that is modern India. Naipaul sees in postcolonial India many revolutions within a revolution. All over India scores of "long buried disruptive peculiarities"-of region, caste and clan-have come to the surface and produced growing factionalism. The result is "a country of a million little mutinies" supported by "twenty kinds of group excess"-sectarian excess, religious excess, regional excess. These "mutinies" cannot be wished away. They are part of the beginning of a new way for India, part of its restoration.”

In *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, the fashion of writing is embellished to perfection. Naipaul has recorded directly the voices and experiences of people he meets. His own observations were missing. The voices spoke on their own and the judgement was left to the readers without any remarks from the side of the author. Naipaul affords to comment on the intellectual growth in India ten years later, on his visit to India:
"There is a kind of intellectual life now that didn't exist in the 1960's. India is on the verge of immense intellectual development. I think in every field."\(^6\)

Naipaul's place in our present world is that of a writer who works amidst the fragmented parts of our history. With his unique vision, Naipaul has brought to focus our past and present. His records were not non-volatile but they were progressive which grows through each book. Naipaul wrote:

"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"\(^5\)

The books should be read in relation to the driving force working within Naipaul as a writer and as a person both. He has not restricted himself to the empirical observations on India, if he had done so these books could have read as the commentaries on India. But, Naipaul has analysed his personal reactions towards India in terms of his experiences in Trinidad, in terms of his cultural inheritance in his grandmother's house, in terms of his anxieties and fears for his own identity. So, to read and comprehend the books, one has to take into account the above factors. The rootlessness
perspective undertakes to perform this double function and the books can thus be studied as writer's attempt to establish a connection with the land of his ancestors. No study on Naipaul and India can be conducted without a discussion of the political side of Naipaul's involvement with India.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

6. Shyam Bhatia, “India needs to come to terms with its past, says Naipaul,” Times of India 30 October 2000