PREFACE
Naipaul’s books about India, entitled *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977) and *A Million Mutinies Now* (1988), are based on his personal experiences on his visit to India in 1962, 1975 and in the late nineteen eighties. Though these books may be regarded as travelogues, they are more than mere travel journals as they tend to the art of fiction and as such, they are to be regarded as non-fiction novels. Naipaul’s experiences and observations are based on his personal study, encounter and feelings, but the journalist’s eye for significant details, his art of selection and his aesthetic approach at projecting his views and visions regarding India’s social, cultural and political scenario bring them to the category of this new genre. Apart from their innovative form and style, these three books essentially present the author’s visions and views on India, which have been received with great controversy. It is, therefore, necessary to make a close investigation of the various views and observations in each of these books on India, in order to arrive at the veracity of truth and also judge the author in a correct perspective.

Chapter one is the introductory chapter on Naipaul. It throws light on the life and development of Naipaul as a writer. It shows the earlier and later influences on Naipaul. His father, together with his short stories and personal counsels, were the major formative influences that left an indelible stamp on Naipaul’s mind. His father had given him the dream to become a writer. The chapter throws light on non-fiction and Naipaulian non-fiction also. Naipaul’s non-fiction compositions undergo several phases of research, interviewing and evaluation. Naipaul’s non-fiction is beautifully interwoven with
historical, political, and geographical matrix without inclining to anyone in particular.

The second chapter deals with Naipaul's treatment of history and civilisation. Most of the non-fictional works of V. S. Naipaul, to an extent, are fraught with historical events, and he talks about nation's cultures and traditions in his works. The civilization of different places and different ages attracted Naipaul and he looked forward to the word 'civilization' to clear his concept of culture, race, milieu, and tradition and so on.

The third chapter deals with his most critically acclaimed book *An Area of Darkness*. In his first visit to India in 1962 Naipaul tried to impose his thought in the book. He saw India and portrayed it in the most contemptuous words one can use. He did not try to talk or interview people, to understand their thoughts, problems, and limitations. In *An Area of Darkness* he does not offer any solution. The material wealth and political amorphousness of India invited conquest after conquest which drained the resources of the country, crippling her and making the idea of building unthinkable. It is impractical for Naipaul to expect a beautiful India rising from British or other ruins. Naipaul's diagnosis has been right but his method of treatment has led him further down blind alleys. It is the Indian acceptance of the British that challenges Naipaul's perceptions most. But, by analyzing British India and its remnants in India today, Naipaul sees not the victory of India's independence, but the humiliation of a people who doggedly follow British customs and keep Kipling's India alive. In more senses than one, Naipaul's journeys into the details of India are a struggle to recognize the experiences which he can then define as the Indian quality. Often the process of search and assessment has resulted in panic and confusion requiring a re-definition of his own identity.
The fourth chapter deals with his second book *India: A Wounded Civilization*. Naipaul accepts that India has been wounded by intermittent assaults of foreigners and while he concedes that it has not found an ideology of regeneration, he negates his own, unconsciously made, conviction in a different concern. Most of his descriptions detail the dirt, the filth, the rag, the deformities and the disease, the corruption and apathy and fatalism.

In *India: A Wounded Civilization* Naipaul continues to explore his distance from and affliction with the land he had imagined, visited and revisited. His focus in this book is the extent to which ‘Indian attitudes’ based on Hindu philosophy and religions have determined the country’s political and cultural history. Naipaul tries to emphasize that the real emergency of India is not political, but psychological. He talks of a civilization rich in its history but wounded by conquests, by confusions, by its own burdens of civilization and history. He portrays India’s wounds—red, gaping, festering, painful in his real perception of India. The India of his imagination is blown into smithereens when the shock of reality, the truth hits him. His eyes fly open and the image of modern India hits him in a gush of words.

In the beginning, India was completely and hopelessly ‘an area of darkness’ with little potential. Then Naipaul came to recognize India as a ‘wounded civilization’ which had discovered an ideology and the will to regenerate itself, an India which is recuperative and least affected by its wounds. It recovers soon. In the final phase, Naipaul feels that the real problem with India is that it is keeping pace with innumerable contradictions and paradoxes. It is in a way like tackling with a million little mutinies.

*India: A Million Mutinies Now* is Naipaul’s third and final stage of the unravelling of the problematic relation between himself and India. The book
recalls his earlier books on India and attempts a revision of his earlier judgments on India. The structure of *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is similar. Both being with a description of the crowds of Bombay, but the difference in tone sets them apart.

The mutinies, will lead on to liberation from the burden of history, the past and the old civilization. Naipaul sounds hopeful in *A Million Mutinies Now* as he sees an upsurge of thought, questioning, and an inclination towards challenging the age old systems, and come up with new. There is a restlessness and weariness of the burden of the past. The country and its people seem ready and poised to start off anew. This craving is very positive, especially in a country of India’s status where history is burdensome in its richness. There is a looking inward, rising above sentimentality which is an impediment to progress.

Mr. Naipaul has criticized India severely in his books. There may be reasons behind this criticism but the way of criticism is unpalatable. Naipaul’s commitment to deliver the truth takes an ugly turn through this type of criticism.

These three books on India fall into a pattern and need to be read in relation to the forces at work within Naipaul, the person and Naipaul, the writer. Had Naipaul limited himself to empirical observations on India, these books could have been read as commentaries on India, but that is not so. Naipaul has taken these books out of the impersonal realm of commentary by referring to the inferiority of his own experience. He has analyzed his personal responses to India in terms of his experiences in Trinidad, in terms to his cultural inheritance in his grandmother’s house, in terms of his anxieties and fears for his own identity. Therefore the only complete perspective that can be adopted for viewing these books can be the one which takes both the above mentioned factors into account. The diasporic perspective performs this
double function and the books can thus be studied as a diasporic writer's attempt to establish a link with the land of his ancestors.

A trend of good criticism should be established with the view of betterment of a country and its society. Through the mode of criticism he has adopted during his three visits, the venom he has poured upon India and its people, Mr. Naipaul rings an alarm bell for our country, for the conditions of society and the condition of our people.

It is felt that what he has written in his books, is not totally wrong. His scathing criticism is on the contemporary prevailing degraded condition of our society, which should be taken up as a challenge. It is high time that we look within ourselves, introspect, retrospect and find a remedy to the ills prevalent in our society.