CHAPTER – 4

V. S. NAIPAUL’S INDIA: A MILLION MUTINIES NOW AND INDIRA GOSWAMI’S PAGES STAINED WITH BLOOD: A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH A DISCUSSION ON HISTORICAL ASPECT IN BOTH THE WORKS

As mentioned in the Introduction, comparative literature, today, has been an important branch of modern literary study and it is very much integral to study of literature. For a comparatist any literature is basically a literature which has to be studied with reference to other literature or literatures.

Method used by Comparative Literature is not confined to simplistic comparison alone. Instead various facets of literary expressions including description, the portrayal of characteristics, interpretation, narration, explanation, evaluation and textual as well as contextual aspects should be brought for discussion as frequently as possible for comparison.

Comparative literature is a method of investigation and is mainly concerned with relationships, resemblances and differences as already mentioned in the Introduction. As Amiya Deb rightly points out in “Towards Comparative Indian Literature”:

Comparison is the right reason for us because, one we are multilingual and two, we are Third World.

Rene Wellek in his essay The Name and Nature of Comparative Literature” saw it essentially important for the comparatist to limit his study to the literary texts or texts, disregarding external factors.

In the nineteenth century, at least before the rise of Ranke’s scientific history, Literature and History were considered branches of the same tree of learning, a tree which sought to interpret experience, for the purpose of guiding and elevating man.

Then came the separation that resulted in the distinct disciplines of literary and historical studies today, despite the fact that the realist novel and Rankean historicism share many similar beliefs about the possibility of writing factually about observable reality.
So, both these two humanist writers of our present study have some common appeal in them that have found expression in their creative works. These similarities and dissimilarities are discussed in the next section.

4.1 Similarities and Dissimilarities: *India: A Million Mutinies Now and Pages Stained With Blood*.

*India: A Million Mutinies Now* was published after thirteen years of his second travel-writing *India: A Wounded Civilization* that refers to his framework of revision of his past visits. V.S. Naipaul visited India between 1988-99. This last travelogue runs into 520 pages. This is a work of great enquiry. He wishes to correct his errors of the past observation of his homeland. He finds India a country of limitless energy and power and a land of strong determinations. The book is also a realization of the writer’s inadequacy to understand India in perspective. The large part of the work contains interviews. In his interviews, he interacted with people of different sections of society. He could see the other side of the Indian milieu completely different from the area of darkness. His vision in the first book is anti-India, in the second writing it deals with decline, ruins and wounds and in the last travelogue it propounds, Naipaul’s vision of reconciliation. *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, is a different version of his homeland.

*Pages Stained With Blood* has been presented in the form of a diary which is again a novel like diary written during the year 1984. The writer is seen roaming in the streets and recording in her diary what she has witnessed and what she heard from the people she met during her wanderings. But slowly, she feels drawn to some queer characters who are Sikhs living in slums and leading a wretched life. Her concern for them makes her actually aware of the unhappy situation Sikhs in the city find themselves in because of the events in East Pakistan. The Golden Temple had been ransacked and the Sikhs were troubled. The situation culminates in the assassination of Indira Gandhi. It leads to the carnage of Sikhs and the writer is a witness to terrible scenes.

Some twenty four Sikhs have tyres put around their necks and are burnt to death in broad daylight.........
My eyes fill with tears as I stand in front of the gurudwars .... The Gurudwara has been reduced to ashes. The Granthi pierced with a trident and the half burnt copy of the Granth Sahib lies in a corner of the veranda.

So, these two dazzling contemporary stars of Literature – V.S. Naipaul, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 2001 and Indira Goswami – recipient of Jnanpith Award in 2000 of India and several other awards, have some striking common features in writing on India. Naipaul had an Indian Brahmin ancestry, though born in Trinidad. Indira Goswami also an Indian Brahmin woman hailing from Assam. It is also fascinating to note that Indira Goswami had even dedicated a book of poems – the only poetry-book of her to V.S.Naipaul whom she had met at the Fort of Neemrana where she has written a poem on him and for him. The text of the poem is given in Chapter- 5.

There you stood before me .......

Such is the reverence of Indira Goswami to V.S. Naipaul.

Naipaul, a Trinidadian of Indian descent living in the West mainly in England, has written in many forms: short story, novella, novel, travel book, essay, history, autobiographical account, and the book review. Naipaul wants to become a writer, after having rejected the claustrophobic squalor of his family life in Trinidad. Actually, Naipaul’s origin lies in India and he belongs to the Gangetic Aryan Brahmin caste; yet, Naipaul is not a Hindu by commitment but in recent years he has become a sort of contemplative writing Hindu thinking about Brahmanical life and Brahmanism in India as is evident in India : A Million Mutinies Now. Naipaul appears on the literary scene from 1950. He has started writing for no other purpose than a feeling that it would be nice to be a writer. But for Indira Goswami writing is like worship. So it is seen here that a thin line of difference in approach to literary pursuits of both these famous writers is discernible here.

Naipaul is an artist whose personal outlook and experience merge distinctively with everything he writes.

To him novel is delight (Reading 13) and a form of social enquiry (Million 18).
It is difficult to find influence on Naipaul’s writings. However, he has admitted the influence of Conrad on himself. For Naipaul, historical event leads to a historical event in a circle that cannot be broken. But for Indira Goswami her life is her influence. She herself stated

“I try to write from the direct experiences of my life. I only mould these experiences with my imagination.”

Here also the difference of influence can be seen.

Naipaul examines his assessments of the socio-politico-religious movements in contemporary India. To quote from a recent interview given by him:

That book on India (IMMN) is not oral history; it’s an account of a civilization at a hinge moment. It’s done through human experience; there’s a special shape to the book, it’s held together by a thread of inquiry, it’s very carefully composed. The idea came to me that the truth about India wasn’t what I thought about India, it’s what they are living through. That is the great discovery; I moved to it slowly through earlier books, the books about the Islamic countries and the Deep South….. The travel book for me has also been a process of learning. It’s much more than oral history. A lot of the work lay in the actual travel, and the day-to-day thinking.

Indira Goswami was also engaged with civil concerns in Delhi. When anti-Sikh-riots brought the city to shame in 1984, Indira’s personal and professional life was caught in turmoil. Goswami was teaching at the University of Delhi and had a residence in Shakti Nagar. So in Pages Stained With Blood, it captures the brutality and the distrust in the cityscape where the fugitives from justice and the perpetrators of crime are difficult to distinguish. Similarity in their perspective can be seen here.

To understand the complex nature of mercenary agents of crime, Indira Goswami even visited the infamous G.B.Road and spoke to sex workers. Presentation in both the works of both authors are similar in the sense that both uses the method of speaking to the characters and interviewing them and the characters speak themselves.

Tales of sexworkers of G.B. Road fill my notebook. I went there with Santokh Singh in his three-wheeler. Before entering a particular area, he had to show all his papers at the police checkpost. He very adroitly half-drove and half- pushed his vehicle into G.B. Road. He parked it before House -42and as I got down, said, “I ll wait for you here.”
In contrast to what Indira Goswami has portrayed about sex-workers Naipaul has perceived Indian women negotiating change in her situation. He has presented Indian women in relation to their individual spaces within which women act. She is shown as working towards her empowerment. In some cases women acts, but does not speak; as in the case of Rajan’s mothers and sisters. In other cases she speaks but does not act: as it is with Mallika. Indian women is moving towards change. This movement has begun within the family – the space most intimately known to women.

Mallika was right. I've always been an Ambedkarite. That’s being part of my being, and I feel that Mallika has a right to say what she feels about her husband.11

Infact Naipaul had also mentioned about sex-workers. The context is different.

…He was busy that day with his political work. He was organizing a demonstration by prostitutes in the Golpitha district, he said.12

Naipaul mentioned about William Howard Russell’s Diary where he stated about Indian Mutiny of 1857 onwards. To Naipaul the diary became a different book.

The long journey to India that Russell described was in fact a journey to the battle for Lucknow.13

Here a change in the perception can be noticed in Indira Goswami’s mention of William Howard Russell’s Diary. Here also, she mentions about the heart-rending brutality that Britishers committed towards the Indians. Reflecting on it from a humanitarian aspect she said:

…The Brigadier smile. “My daughter stopped eating tandoori chicken after she read Howard Russell’s account of an incident during the Sepoy Mutiny. The forces of Outram had captured Badshah Bagh at Lucknow, and near the bridge on the river Gomti, they surprised a rebel youth. They dragged him by his legs to an open field and bayonetted him all over, just as they do the chickens while putting them on spits …….. “My eyes fall on the chickens in the tandoor ……..” The Brigadier promises to present me a copy of William Howard Russell’s book.14

In an interview given to L.K. Sharma, London based correspondents of The Times of India, Naipaul considered the mushrooming of separatist movements inevitable in the present Indian context. He said:
When Iqbal began to do his thinking in the 30’s, he laid the foundation of some of the problems we have today. Iqbal said that Islamic religion is not a matter of private conscience like some other religions. Islam required a society on its own because of the nature of its beliefs. What is happening in India now is a delayed response to Iqbal. Why not 10 years earlier? Because things were wretched. Things have got better. The better things get, the more these feelings of self become accentuated.

Indira Goswami’s approach to the separatist movement is different from Naipaul in the sense that she mostly presents a detailed account of the Sikh riot with a more humanistic angle than a political one whereas Naipaul discusses the reasons behind Sikh uprising, its movement and its aftermath of killing of Indira Gandhi. Naipaul discusses politically the entire scenario of Sikh uprising in the chapter ‘The Shadow of Guru’.

“….. I had heard an interview with Bhindranwale in the Golden Temple. Sikhism, Bhindranwale had said, was a revealed religion; the Sikhs were people of Book.

While in Bombay, Naipaul visited Muhammad Ali Road with Nikhil Laxman, a journalist. His first impression of the area as described in his book, captures the claustrophobic atmosphere which gives a ghetto an insularity that infuses the dwellers with a sense of security.

It was dreadfully crowded, with every kind of smell and noise. The brown – black smoke from cars using kerosene –adulterated fuel was like hot fog in the sunlight. It burned the skin and felt jagged in the lungs. It was part of the general feeling of oppression and the slogan about Islam, seen through this smoke, had the effect of a scream. The slogan was in letters as high as the wall on which it was painted, and it was in English. It wasn’t for the people of the ghetto; it was for people outside, people like the Shiv Sena, who might think of making trouble.

Indira Goswami in *Pages Stained With Blood* gives us a glimpse of political and violent situation through the character of Balbir Singh. He says almost in a whisper:

Times are bad. The police have been on the rampage since morning. A follower of Sant Bhindranwale has been nabbed somewhere. You never know when they will swoop down on our waste paper. After Lala Jagat Singh’s murder and
Bhindranwalle’s arrest, the police had been carrying out search operations in the Gurudwara Gurudarshan Prakash premises.  

Tell me have you seen Sant Bhindranwale / I have heard people say that you all Sant equate him with Guru Arjun das?  

Bibiji I met the sant at Takhat Dam Dami Sahib. I never saw a taller man before nor did I hear one who could chant the Guru Granth Sahib better…….  

Similar description of Bhindranwale is given in *India: A Million Mutinies Now* by V.S.Naipaul:  

He was a tall man, sixfeet one inch, as tall as I am and a lean man. A very forthright man, outspoken. He had very simple habits. He ate very little.  

Again a similar description of violence is depicted in *Pages Stained with Blood*:  

Loot, arson, rape and murder has become the order of the day in Punjab. My notebook is filled with tales of Blood and Dust. The ominous shadow of murder and destruction in Punjab spreads over Delhi like the shadow cast by vultures on a corpse.  

Such similar situation finds graphic reflection in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*:  

Everyday the newspaper carried plain official accounts of events in the Punjab:  

…..so many killed by Sikh terrorists, so many people arrested for harbouring terrorists; so many terrorists killed by police; so many intruders from across the Pakistan border killed ….. In the wide streets and round abouts of New Delhi there were reminders of the trouble in the north. At night there were road blocks. At places below the trees there were sand bags, guns, and policemen.  

In both the works similarity is seen in the description of beheading of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the tenth guru of Sikh community.  

……… I am reminded of the gentle face of Guru Tegh Bahdur. ….. It was in the Chandni Chowk prison that he was tortured for over forty days because he had gone to Kashmir to save some Brahmins from forced conversions. On 11 November, 1975, under a huge tree opposite the Kotwali, the Guru too was beheaded.
In *India : A Million Mutinies Now*, a short description is given:

….. got Guru Teg Bahadur beheaded, got the infant sons of Guru Govind Singh bricked alive in a wall …..

Again similarity is seen in narrating the events of army entering the Golden Temple in both the works:

…..4 June 1984. The army has entered the Golden Temple Complex.
……..Thursday, 7 June 1984. All the papers carried the news that the army had captured the Golden Temple ….

In *India : A Million Mutinies Now* description was even more elaborate.

…..Eventually the army assaulted the Temple. They found it better fortified than they knew. The action lasted a night and day ….. To avenge the desecration, Mrs Gandhi was murdered by some of her Sikh Guards ….. There were riots after the murder. The most dreadful were in Delhi, where hundreds died.

Not much elaborate description of Indira Gandhi’s murder was depicted. Rather the aftermath of her murder was portrayed in detail. The Sikh–Riot in Delhi was worse and it was described in detail in *Pages Stained with Blood*.

“Indira Gandhi murdered?

Khoon ka Badla Khoon Se

With his background as member of a minority community in Trinidad, Naipaul understood the dilemmas of Anwar and his kind, and sympathized with them:

I felt that if I had been in their position, confined to Bombay, to that area, to that row, I too would have been a passionate Muslim. I had grown up in Trinidad as a member community was small, you could never walk away from it, the grimmer things became, the more you insisted on being what you were.

His sympathy for minorities in India can be interpreted as a vicarious feeling for his own past expressed from a secure position in the west, financially and otherwise, that he has made for himself. The same applies to his perspective on the Punjab problem, which pinpoints the root cause as resentment against the central government. Naipaul inferred:
The establishing of a Sikh identity was a recurring Sikh need. Religion was the base of this identity; religion provided the emotional charge. But that also meant that the Sikh cause had been entrusted to people who were not representative of the Sikh achievement, were a generation or so behind.\textsuperscript{28}

He spoke to a number of persons in Punjab, from different strata of society – journalists, a former prince from the house of Patiala, an ex-bureaucrat who resigned from the Indian Administrative Service “because of his commitment to the Sikh cause”,\textsuperscript{29} victims of terrorist attacks in villages. The former bureaucrat described as

… forty one, tall, just over six feet, slender, with somber, intense eyes.\textsuperscript{30} appears to be Simranjit Singh Mann who resigned from the Indian Police Service to involve himself more actively in Punjab politics and now heads the Akali Dal (M) group.

While Naipaul’s analysis of Muslim fundamentalism in India is based on a visit to a ghetto and conversations with the inhabitants, his assessment of Sikh alienation seems more comprehensive. He established the historicity of Sikh alienation:

“The British, at the height of their empire, had a general disregard for all Indians. Even in 1858, while the Mutiny was going on, Russell noticed this slighting British attitude towards the Sikh soldiers who were fighting on the British side.

Independence and the position of India in 1947 damaged the Sikhs; millions had to leave Pakistan. But again, as after their defeat by the British, they quickly recovered.\textsuperscript{31}

Naipaul spoke at length about Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (1948-1984), preacher turned militant leader in Punjab his rise and his various confrontations, on the basis of discussions with journalists who had actually met Bhindranwale. His account of politicization of religion in Punjab that led to Sikh fundamentalism is rounded off with an account of Operation Bluestar. Naipaul quotes an interviewee- a reporter whom he calls Dalip, but one can see where his sympathies lay:

Bluestar itself was not shocking to me. What was shocking was the manner in which it was done. It was a very bad operation. I thought Bhindranwale and his men could have been caught without bloodshed. I felt sorry for the 93 soldiers who were killed. They chose such bad day to catch Bhindranwale. And they did not even catch him.\textsuperscript{32}
Naipaul’s concluding remarks on the Punjab problem establishes him as an outsider, who is able to comprehend it partially and is not interested in a deeper analysis:

From the outside, it seemed that the Sikhs, had brought this tragedy on themselves, manufacturing grievances out of their great success in independent India. It was as if there was some intellectual or emotional flaw in the community, as if in their fast unbroken rise over the last century there had developed a lack of balance between their material achievement and their internal life, so that, though in one way so adventurous and forward looking, in another way they remained close to their tribal and country origins.33

Characteristically, Naipaul did not mention NRI Sikhs like the self styled Khalistani leader, Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan (b.1940). Based in UK, and their role in Punjab problem. Naipaul would never criticize immigrants like himself, who claim a stake in the politics in the country of their origin and for him politicization of religion became a third world phenomenon.

Naipaul did not react to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 as violently as the western world and a large section of the intelligentsia in India did. He told a journalist:

The people who say that there was no temple there are missing the point. Babar ….. had contempt for the country he had conquered. And his building of that mosque was an act of contempt for the country. In Turkey they turned the church of Santa Sophia into a mosque. In Nicosia churches were converted into mosques too ….these things have happened before and elsewhere. In Ayodhya the construction of a mosque on a spot regarded as sacred by the conquered population was meant as an insult. It was meant as an insult to an ancient idea, the idea of Rama which was two or three thousand years old.34

Predictably, Naipaul’s remark shocked many in India, specially the Marxists and he was criticized as a supporter of “Hindutwa”. “I cannot get involved in that” he remarked with a “dismissive gesture” to L.K. Sharma, but he elaborated on his earlier remarks, in a general way:

Development is not something that you talk about. It affects everything. It does not occur in isolation. When people begin to have more food and more security, they begin to have a greater sense of themselves.35
Earlier in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, Naipaul had expressed similar views while tracing the genesis of the Dalit Panthers that had been a certain kind of protest movement in Maharashtra in the 70s and is now confined to literature produced by Dalit writers. In his words…..

....A certain amount of money had come to the people known as harijans, a certain amount of education, and with that there had also come the group sense and political consciousness. They had ceased to be abstractions. They had begun to do things for themselves. They had become people stressing their particularly, just as better off groups in India stressed their particularities.36

Naipaul considered Namdeo Dhasal, the founder of the Dalit Panthers and appreciated the originality in his writings.

Namdeo’s great originality was that he had written naturally, using words and expressions that Dalits and no one else used. In his first book of poems he had written specifically in the language of the Bombay brothel area.37

In the course of his conversations with Naipaul, Dhasal’s differences with Dalits because of his Marxist leanings, become clear to the reader. Naipaul did not meet other Dalit writers like Daya Pawar, his assessment of the Dalits as a group is not balanced.

Naipaul’s assessment of the Shiv Sena is relatively more comprehensive. He met a few Shiv Sena activists, some of whom had been associated with the movement from its inception. One of them, Mr. Raote, told him about the first meeting of the Shiv Sena, deemed to be a youth organization when it was founded.

In Raote’s words:

The first meeting lasted about half an hour. It was in the main room of their (Bal Thackeray’s) small house. Their father occupied that room, being an old man. He wrote everything on a Marathi type writer. It is still there in the house as a memorial of him. It was Bal Thackeray’s father who gave the name ‘Shiv Sena’. Shiva’s army. It just seemed natural and right. And we pledged ourselves at that meeting to fight the injustices done to the sons of soil.38
For Naipaul, organizations like the Shiv Sena are inevitable in the present Indian context. It is one of the many “mutinies” referred to in the title. Naipaul did not get unduly perturbed by it. He opined,

“Independence had come to India like a kind of revolution; now there were many revolutions within that revolution. What was true of Bombay was true of other parts of India as well: of the state of Andhra, of Tamil Nadu, Assam, the Punjab.39

Later, in a newspaper interview, he said,

The Shiv Sena is a middle class movement and not that of downtrodden people. It is part of a larger self-making process. This process will take a longtime. In India, you will have to live with movements like that for the next 100 years. 40

These movements, of the middle class as well as the underprivileged people, in the aftermath of the Muslim and later British rule, have been instrumental in shaping the new India, essentially Hindu, according to Naipaul. When he visited Goa, he realized that: 41

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

Secularists will not agree with this view. Also, one who has come across Naipaul’s general advocacy of a global civilization, which he reiterated recently in an interview given to an Indian journalist, would find him paradoxical. To quote from the interview:

We all live in a universal civilization, some more than the others. We have our individual particularities. But we are all inhabited by a universal civilization. It is very hard to go back. 42

Socio-political movements interested Naipaul during his recent visits to India, but he was attracted by other aspects of Indian life as well. He gives an insightful approach to separatist movements and other attempts with an ideology of identity assertion behind them, in his India: A Million Mutinies Now. It can be said that India: A Million Mutinies Now remains an impressive effort in the tradition of travel writing about India from Kipling to date.
4.2 Historical Consciousness In India: A Million Mutinies Now and Pages Stained With Blood:

The relationship between fiction and history has been a debated topic about which a discussion has been made in the first chapter. It is said that

‘The flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep,’\(^{43}\)
wrote American novelist and literary critic Henry James in 1879 and argued that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature. In this section a threefold approach to history is attempted as a basis for narrative. It will first establish the concept of history and from there it will investigate how each author has made creative use of historical material. Finally it will link back to how far these works are relevant to the debate of history and novel.

History is natural selection. Mutant versions of the past struggle for dominance; new species of fact arise and old saurian truths go the wall, blindfolded and smoking last cigarette. Only the mutations of the strong survive. The weak, the anonymous, the defeated leave few marks. History loves only those who dominate her. It is a relationship of mutual enslavement.\(^{44}\)

It is discussed in the first chapter that novel can be defined as an artistic and cultural artifact that, in significant ways embodies, reflects, and projects the experiences, attitudes, systems of belief and cultural references of a given people at a given period of time. Fiction is actually shaped by cultural forces such as History. Since its emergence, the novel has been associated to history, the relationship between the two has been either one of exclusion or inclusion. The long established dichotomy between history and fiction pre-supposed that the latter belonged exclusively to the domain of imagination and subjectivity whereas history to that of reality and truth.

Infact in recent times the boundaries between history and fiction are increasingly blurred as in the case of texts under discussion. Theorists claim that since history and fiction are linguistic and ideological constructs and highly conventionalized in form, they should be treated on the same foot. Evidently, one of the salient and major characteristics of contemporary fiction worldwide is that it explicitly or implicitly questions, parodies, imitates or incorporates history. Thus the relationship between history and fiction, traditionally defined by its mutual exclusion,
is nowadays characterized by their interdependence. Contemporary fiction is also characterized by its undertaking the task of consciously telling the stories those long forgotten by History.


Traditionally history has been considered as a self contained, objective and unbiased body of knowledge. Historical representation of past events was believed to be impartial and truthful. The recording of historical facts and events requires a previous process of interpretation and analysis and these obviously imply a high degree of subjectivity. Human subjectivity is largely shaped by culture and its dominant ideology. History in its stance as a human construct, bears the imprints of cultural and ideological discourse. Since history cannot account for all past events, there is a need for selection. The parameters and criteria according to which such a selection is made, cannot be but ideological and somehow arbitrary. As Linda Hutcheon states: “Facts are not given but are constructed by the kinds of question we ask of events.”

Paul Ricouer (1913-2005), the French philosopher defines historical narrative as a kind of an allegory of temporality, a true allegory. According to him, it touches the larger structure of meaning – figurative and allegorical. It mediates between the events and certain universal human experiences of ‘temporality’. The historiographer employs his productive imagination in narrating the event with the help of words, and also he makes explicit the meaning that has already been implicit in the event.

A historical narrative is both realistic and symbolic at the same time, as the event being narrated is specific and further many such events take place in the world.
And what is more important is the fact that the order of the event is by and large the same.

Hayden White observes:

“every historical discourse worthy of name is not only literal account of the past and the figuration of temporality, but, beyond that, a literal representation of the contents of a timeless drama, that of humanity at grips with the experience of temporality.47

He further points out that the stories come to us with beginnings, middles and ends, which the narrator places in order that corresponds with his notions of meaning, rather than out of certainty that it is believed to have. In other words, the text is given a shape by the historian by imposing a plot on it. Thus historiography comes close to the novel writing.

Wallace Martin also comments:

Knowing what is of human significance, the historian has a subject; knowing something of human thoughts, feelings desires, the incredible variety of their manifestations, and the social structures that mediate them, he or she can form a hypothesis concerning, why something happened as it did. This hypothesis determines which facts will be put together. The novelist, who often depends heavily on realistic documentation, undertakes the same process.48

Both the novelist and the historiographer indulge themselves in inventing a plot for their narrative. However, in history ‘the tail wags the dog’ as the plot is already ‘found because the end of the event is known to all. And therefore the historian begins from the end, of which he is sure, and moves towards the beginning. During the course, he discovers the inherent plot involved in it and records it. On the other hand, the novelist begins from the beginning invents a plot and narrates it. He is privileged in the sense that he can steer into any plausible direction. The meaning of stories lies in their ‘emplottment’ which helps ‘configure’ events in such a way that it represents symbolically the human experience of the time.

Both the authors in the context of our study have very creatively used the historical material. Naipaul sees the importance of history. Naipaul is not a detached historical connoisseur who is interested in the past; nor curiously for someone who invests so much in history is he interested in the narrative and literary forms within
which diverse peoples and cultures understand, imagine and appropriate their past. His characters, whom he presents in all their individuality and striving, carry the imprint of their societies. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is a prescient precisely because it relates the characters of social movements like the Shiv Sena to the existential burdens Hindu society produces. For Naipaul, whose great achievement was to bring to light in the words of the Nobel citation, “suppressed histories” forgotten historical complexes, sedimented into our psyches, distort us.

It seems that the Indian reading public are extremely fond of reading history garbed in the form of fiction. On having been asked what history is, Naipaul replied in an interview that history is

…interplay of various people and it has gone on forever. I can think of no culture that has been left to itself.49

To understand India, therefore, Naipaul interacts with people from varied backgrounds and groups and pluralistic voices emerge. Naipaul’s facile pen pours forth pages and pages of a lively narration. Kashmir, Bombay, Bangalore, Calcutta, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Bengal, Naipaul undertakes a whirlwind tour around. He speaks to the leaders of the Dalits and Shiv Sena in Bombay and has a glimpse of their lives. He perceives the development going on in India and the growing affluence there. Within that limited range, the narration reads like a narration in a novel. The communal problems in Madras, the state of the dying city of Calcutta, the history of Lucknow, the women’s question – all these come within the purview of Naipaul and on the basis of this empirical quest, Naipaul arrives at his own conclusion. His quest is optimistic, a mature and sober one. It is an acceptance of its vital energies and conflicting claims.

Naipaul discusses the genesis of the Dalit Panther movement that had been a certain protest movement in Maharashtra in the 70s and is now confined to literature produced by Dalit writers. This genesis of Dalit movement is historically significant. In his words…..

…a certain amount of money had come to the people known as harijans, a certain amount of education, and with that there had also come the group sense and political consciousness. They had ceased to be abstractions. They had begun to do

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things for themselves. They had become people stressing their particularly, just as better off groups in India stressed their particularities. \(^{50}\)

So according to Naipaul these movements, of the middle class as well as the underprivileged people, in the aftermath of the Muslim and later British rule, have been instrumental in shaping the new India, essentially Hindu. Naipaul unfolds the life history of Rajan and discusses the changes that had appeared in India. It also talks about the old heritage of Calcutta and its history. Naipaul talks about Old Goa with its staggering buildings and he unfolds the rich history of Maharajas of Mysore and various rulers of Bijapur and discusses a history of great ruler Tipu Sultan and the interference of the British Power. Infact this episode is a very significant part of Indian history.

\[\text{He had been defeated by the British, by Wellington. Old History, not known to every- one in England now, its place in imagination having been taken over by later wars, later villains. The British had installed the Mysore Maharajas of in place of Tipu.}^{51}\]

When he visited Goa, he realized that:

\[\text{Through all the twists and turns of history, through all the imperial venturing in this part of the world, which the Portuguese arrival in India portended, and finally through the unlikely British pressure in India, a Hindu India had grown again, more complete and unified than any India in the past.}^{52}\]

Naipaul described the DMK with all its history, its leader Periyar and its Mylapore temple. So here also he depicts a significant aspect of history.

Naipaul also makes a fine account of Calcutta, the British built city of India, one of the early centres of British India, with its Bengal Club and such other features of the city under the British rule, Naipaul narrates the story of Chidanada Das Gupta who takes him to Shantiniketan and gives him a full account of Tagore’s family. Naipaul presents a beautiful description of historical events:

\[\text{In 1946 there were the Hindu- Muslim massacres. They marked the beginning of the end for the city. The next year India was independent, but partitioned. Bengal was divided. A large Hindu refugee population came and camped in Calcutta; and}\]

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Calcutta, without a hundredth part of the resilience of Europe, never really recovered.\textsuperscript{53}

Naipaul also talks about the cultural heritage of the Muslims in Lucknow with all its Muslim features and cultural scenes. Naipaul expresses the fear that haunts the Indian Muslims which is very significant part of today’s history. Infact Ayodhya issue- i.e. the Babri- Masjid issue is a very crucial part of the history of India:

Then there was the affair of a mosque in the town of Ayodhya, 300 miles away, which the Hindus had turned into temple. Ayodhya was important even sacred, to Hindus. It was the birthplace of Lord Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, and there were Hindus who said that after their invasion the Muslims had built the mosque on the site of Rama’s birthplace. With independence, Hindus wished to claim the site again.\textsuperscript{54}

Naipaul also plunges deep into the history of the Sepoy Mutiny in India in order to highlight the significance of My Diary In India, written by the special correspondent of The Times, who was attached to the staff of British headquarters when the British soldiers attacked Lucknow.

Naipaul again plunges into a very important chapter in Modern Indian history. He discusses the history of the rise of Sikhism in Punjab. According to him the Sikh movement is based on the instinct of rebellion:

\ldots Buddha had rebelled; Guru Nanak, the first Guru of the Sikhs, had rebelled. \ldots

Guru Nanak’s rebellion or breaking away had been prompted by the horrors of the Muslim’s invasions- the horrors to which at that time no one could see an end.\textsuperscript{55}

From this Naipaul comes to make a critical review of the history of India after independence leading to the rise of action initiated by Bhindranwale from the Golden temple of Amritsar- for the Sikh Movement. Unfolding the history of Gurtej Singh, who had resigned from the Indian Administrative Service for his commitment to the Sikh cause, the writer expresses the feelings and the sentiments of the Sikh people through this man. He also connects this story of Gurtej Singh with the story of Kapur Singh who too joined the Sikh movement. Naipaul gives a vivid account of Operation Bluestar in general in 1982and the repercussions it had on Punjab and the Sikh community in particular.
Naipaul in the last chapter talks about tourism department in Kashmir and also makes a historical survey of that thousands of mutinies that the country had witnessed since 1858 and it is a realization that brings him to justify the title of this book.

A million mutinies, supported by twenty kinds of group excess, sectarian excess, religious excess, regional excess, the beginning of self awareness, it would seem, the beginning of an intellectual life, already negated by old anarchy and disorder.  

It is seen that Naipaul is more attracted by socio-political movements during his visits to India, and also other aspects of Indian life which in a way suggests a thin line of difference with Indira Goswami. It can be said that *India: A Million Mutinies Now* sets an wonderful example in the tradition of travel writing about India.

*Pages Stained with Blood, as described earlier* is centred around the 1984 riots in Delhi. It is nothing but mere description of eye witness massacre of the Sikhs. So this account is nothing but history. This book rings true to its title, the pages are dripping with blood and tears, with blind rage and injustice, with human suffering and also, human empathy. The cruelty and brutality that took in Delhi is unthinkable. The silent Sikh Baba stalking the park at night like an apparition had lost his speech. But before that he had lost two sons, and his only daughter was raped, mutilated and murdered at the check post by the police and the military during their escape to Delhi. This is a very important document depicting the entire Sikh riot in Delhi. It is relevant in the sense that it speaks of the failure of democracy, it speaks of a failure of civilization, and it reminds of all failures of our religious teachings by the saints. In the midst of such cruelty, it also speaks of love, delicate, romantic love that can never be requited and a human warmth and care that survives the horrendous acts of hatred. So this work is also nothing but history. Goswami describes Old Delhi and she also refers from time to time the Sepoy Mutiny that broke out in 1857. Goswami had also described in brief the resentment of the Sikhs and finally the riot.

Satnam Singh had become the chief of the Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Kahlistan in 1982, he had twenty nine people hung in the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh and had shot dead fifteen farmers at Ropar. ……

Goswami depicts the turmoil. She writes:

The country is an turmoil. The Director general of police in Punjab, Attawal was shot dead by terrorists yesterday on the steps of Golden Temple. The body lay
riddled with bullets, the Prasad Halwa scattered. ..... Sikhs are being forced to get down from buses at Sarai Rohilla, Rani Jhansi marg, Kingsway Camp and at many other places and searched.58

She depicts the scenario of Golden Temple.

2 June, 1984. Newspaper reports stated that the situation in the Golden Temple had worsened. Sandbags were piled high all around. The army occupied the balconies of houses in the area.59

The entire Delhi and Punjab were under tense situation. She has given an eyewitness report.

The Delhi sky was overcast, clounds like thick black ashes on a cremation ground. ..... We remained glued to our television sets most of the time. Seven Garhwal Rifles, Nine Kumaon Regiment, Bihar Regiment, all had entered the complex.

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From 6 June to 8 June, 1984 my notebook carries nothing but accounts of blood and dust.... Killings and more killings!....... Some images are etched in my mind, too deep to be washed away. The Bodies of women, her child and an old man, caught in the crossfire of the extremists and the army – riddled with bullets – lay in front of Guru Ramdas Hostel. .................60

The shadow of the Golden Temple loomed large over Delhi. The police used tear gas to disperse a violent crowd near the Bangla Sahib Gurudwara. Section 144 had already been clamped there.

The rebel Sikhs set fire to ten buses around the gurudwara. ...... Killing and marauding! For a whole week, my notebook recorded tales of death and killing alone. The bullet riddled body of Bhindranwale was ultimately recovered from the basement of the Akal Takht on the morning of 7 June. In the evening, just outside the gurudwara, his body was hurriedly put on a bier and cremated in front of thousands of people. All the newspaper of 8 June carried the news of his death.61

So such is the description of the entire Sikh movement and the riot. Indira Goswami had very beautifully painted such horrible history of the Sikh riot with graphic realism. So these are nothing but history. Infact Goswami herself says:
Many University students have gone underground. During the last one year supporters of the Akali Dal, Bhindranwale, of the Longwal group and the Badal – Tohra faction, have been arrested. The AISSF members have been rounded up. Seeing those Sikhs in suspicious circumstances at Majnu Katila, I’ve been worried about you, wondering whether you too have been arrested.  

Indira Goswami had revealed incidents that she had witnessed during the riot which is a scar on Indian history. Murder of Indira Gandhi and its repercussion in Delhi is a story of nothing but cruelty and brutality.

Teachers and students troop out of the tutorial building. The students, talking and joking moments earlier, fall silent.

“Indira Gandhi murdered?”

“No, it can’t be,” one professor almost shouts. “It was only an attempt. I have just heard the eleven o’clock bulletin on the radio.”

We keep standing in the verandha for quite some time. Then special issues of a national daily are thrown to us by a student. There is an eerie silence all around. In the various posters on the wall, Indira Gandhi’s face smiles brightly at us.

So the *India: A Million Mutinies Now* falls under category of travelogue dealing with past events of India’s history and society and linking them with the present events and episodes. Indira Goswami’s novel on the other hand is a mixed work of imagination and history. She herself stresses in many interviews that there is no difference between fact and fiction.

Infact stains of blood have remarkable significance in Goswami’s life as well as writings. The feeling begins from the blood pooled body of her husband to the blood stained door in the temple complex of Goddess Kamakya in Guwahati in Assam. That is why perhaps, in the work under discussion, heart rending portrayal of blood stained situations are depicted again and again.

In this context, Hiren Gohain, a renowned critic stated that no doubt these various levels of mental upheaval in the human characters have been caused due to historical impressions. But to the writer, perhaps there is beyond that – something more mystical in the human condition – not easily explainable or not to be analysed in the simple way.
Therefore Gohain has said that from the historical aspect itself the novel reflects three different layers of Indian mind in Delhi – Delhi being the symbol of modern India. Delhi is, as if the symbol of heart. In one layer, there is strict discipline and control of law and order represented by the Army Brigadier with his experience and belief in military strength for administration and on the outside the distressed and depraved class, the poor and rickety hungry youth aspiring employment in the slum areas, the dirty talks, the harlots etc.

In the second layer slightly under it. there are marks, stains and ruins of the pictures and impressions left in the life and society of the unexpected cruelty, violence, massacre, torture, nauseousness and hate, ugliness caused by the unfortunate political divisions of the country. And even beyond that if we dig deep further below, in the past, we get the impression of colonial torture, brutality, the Sepoy Mutiny etc. of Indian history.  

So it can be stated that Goswami’s story has moved in two directions – horizontal expansion from events to events and vertical search delving from depth to depth.

Goswami’s work introduces a few other details about the local Sikhs. In the first place, she refers to the significance of the Sikh sacred space (Gurudwara) in the community life of Sikhs. Actually she had visited a number of local Gurudwaras to be aware of the content of the sacred text and learnt to appreciate the significance of sabads (scared hymns). Violation of the dignity of religious places had long remained an important aspect of riots under colonial rule. In Delhi, the colonial legacy was perhaps carried over to independent India.

Secondly, the author had sympathized with the sufferings of Sikhs but she did not support their unbridled terrorist activity. Her bitter denunciation of cold blooded murder of many innocent men by Sikh militants underlines her commitment to the message of peace and nonviolence though she never had told anything about its root. Thirdly, the novelist is silent regarding the creamy layer among local Sikhs. She had many good friends there but the Pages Stained With Blood is all about Delhi Sikh subalterns. Goswami deals with the Sikhs of the streets. Fourthly, the role of rumours in the life of local people has not also missed her attention.
So Goswami’s *Pages Stained With Blood* reveals traces of Sikh history. Infact the Delhi tragedy of 1984 revived the memory of the partition of 1947. On both occasions Sikhs have suffered greatly. So these works are relevant to the debate of history and novel. In Chapter -1, we have discussed at length the relationship between history and novel.

As discussed in chapter – I that though the relation of novel and history may sound paradoxical on the surface, but the truth is that all these works contain traces of history. So in this sense, though their works cannot replace history but they complement each other and they help us in identifying the past. Thus, as has been observed in the previous chapters that Indira Goswami and V.S.Naipaul have made use of history in their works in different ways.

Commenting on Naipaul’s use of historical problems Subramani rightly observes:

> It is true that in Naipaul’s novels and nonfiction personal and historical problems are linked. Speaking of his method Naipaul has said that he creates Socio- historical condition and the characters are subjected to its needs.\(^{55}\)
References


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