CHAPTER - IV
The Ugly India/Indians

This chapter proposes to study the negative images of India that are portrayed in V.S. Naipaul and in some of the works of Salman Rushdie. The expatriate writers sometimes describe with ghoulish glee the poverty, squalor, dirt, corruption and communal hatred, caste barriers which have been the curse of Indian society. While the candidness with which they present the dark side of the country, can be appreciated but the motives behind such negative attitudes can also be examined.

Naipaul’s three books about India An Area of Darkness (1964), India : A Wounded Civilization (1977), India A Million Mutinies Now (1990), are his own experiences when he visited India in 1962, 1975, and 1988. These books have been designated as travelogues by some, but it does not remain confined to this single view. Though they transcend the mere citing of travel accounts, they try to display art of fiction. However they can be put into the category of non-fiction novels. Naipaul has been a keen observer in collecting the details of the places and people he meets. His first hand experiences are based on one to one relationship. At the same time he keeps a detached view of a reporter in accounting social, political and cultural situations. But there is a tinge of aesthetic sense, which puts him in a different category. Naipaul’s first visit to India, in 1962, his land of ancestors, is an account of his dream. Naipaul seems to be cherishing the desire to follow a different path of the country he travelled which gives him some special distinctive features in his travelogue and non-
fiction novels. This has led him to produce a sensitive, impressionistic and emotional writing especially in *An Area of Darkness*. Naipaul’s first visit to India in 1962 was a yearning to see his dream land, the land of his ancestors. Naipaul’s visit to India was to look for his roots and to satiate his desire of belongingness.

The feature in finding roots, leads him to write some very sensitive travel writing, which has impressions and emotions well documented in his first book. Naipaul moves from one part of India to the other in time, he also meets various persons. He observes individuals and society from close quarters. His observation encompasses the working of caste system in India and various rites and rituals performed by them. Since Naipaul himself hails from a Brahmin family, he is all the more curious in studying the outlook, and attitude of this society. He closely watches their rites and rituals. This in turn makes him travel to Srinagar to undertake the holy journey of Amarnath cave, where a five feet high ice lingam is made during Sawan. In *An Area of Darkness* Naipaul tries to identify this lingam which is a symbol of Shiva with India:

> And in the cave, the God, the massive ice phallus, Hindus speculation soared so high; its rituals remained so elemental. Between the conception of the world as illusion and the veneration of the phallus there was no link; they derived from different starts of responses. But Hinduism discarded nothing; and it was perhaps right not to. The phallus endured, unrecognized as such, recognized only as Shiva, as continuity, it was doubly the symbol of India. (AAOD 164-165)
Naipaul’s visit to Amarnath does not have any devotional undercurrents. Instead there is more of journalistic mission and his strong yearning since his early days of spending time in the Himalayas. Moreover, what appears to be more significant is that he expresses his own views about the Indian societies and their way of life. His remarks appear quite contrary to the Indian expectations, invites lot of anger from Indians. To Naipaul all the rituals performed in his family remained obscure as he could not understand the language. Even the images did not interest him. He found the ceremonies to be monotonous. Naipaul while trying to learn about Hinduism practiced in India, found Hindus bound by caste despite claiming themselves to be westernized. He found that India despite gaining freedom could not get rid off the caste bound bearings. He unveils the pathetic state of religion which remains helplessly bound in the clutches of caste system. He remains critical of the Indian Sanyasi especially Mahesh Yogi, whose spirituality makes his followers escapists. Instead they should have been prepared all the more to meet the challenges of the world.

Naipaul could not however come to terms with the concept of Karma as advocated by Hindu philosophy. The Karma to be deserving and does not lead to self-realization. He observed that it was changing to this Karmic theory that the sweepers embrace their state of degradation. This obsession with Karmic philosophy kept them moving over metaphysical planes instead of exhibiting delinquency over issue of grave national concern.

Naipaul who hailed from a Brahmin family had traces of Brahmanism in his early age. In An Area of Darkness he confeses that while once he was attending his science class in school:
At one stage a beaker and a length of the tube were passed from boy to boy, so that we might suck and observe the effects. I let the beaker pass me. I thought I hadn’t been seen, but an Indian boy in the row behind …whispered ‘Real Brahmin’. His tone was approving. (AAOD 37)

Although most of the families that went to Trinidad as indentured labourers clung themselves to caste, religion and creed - the only security they had in the alien land. But Naipaul’s refusal to undergo ‘Janaiyu’ ceremony may not just be a revolt against the monopolizing of rituals; instead it may be spelling out his exclusivity, quite characteristic of diaspora nature. Even the negation of Ramchandra Dubey, his relative may not just be rejecting the caste system. It may also be his objection to the horrific site of poverty at Ramchandra Dubey’s place, and may be he did not want to relate himself to this. But Naipaul’s attitude towards caste and tradition are conflicting sometimes. He says :

“I had rejected tradition, yet how can I explain my feeling of outrage when I heard that in Bombay they used candles and electric bulbs for the Diwali festival, and not the rustic clay lamps, of immemorial design, which in Trinidad we still used. I had been born an unbeliever, yet the thought of the decay of the old customs and reverences saddened me”… (AAOD 38)

Since in Trinidad, the caste system which was associated with trade skill was also taken as to be the practice of ethnic groups. However, Naipaul vehemently attacks the caste system In India and calls it separatist and generating decay in the society:
Caste, sanction by the Gita with almost propagandist forever, might be seen as part of the older pragmatism, the life of classical India. It has decayed and ossified with the society, and its corollary, function, has become all... Every man is an island, each man to his function, his private contract with God... This is caste. In the beginning a no doubt useful division of labour in a rural society, it has now divorced function from social obligation, position from duties. (AAOD 82-83)

Commenting on Anatha Murthy’s Samskara he raises the dilemma for the believer of karma. The men are blessed with lives according karma’s of previous lives. The question persists how he knows his true self. While referring to Anantha Murthy’s Samskara, the protagonist Acharya who is a torch bearer of Brahmins holds a very high opinion about himself, a goodness incarnate but a sexual misadventure fills him with guilt. He still degrades himself till there is a yearning to comeback to Brahmanical order. This entire journey leads to discover him and attain spiritual growth.

Naipaul seems to be sensationalizing his western crowd by making a biased comment (of sixties) exhibiting his elitist Brahmanical learning: Reserving government jobs for untouchables helps nobody. It places responsibility in the hands of the unqualified... (AAOD 85)

If Naipaul’s view for Gandhi is scanned, the picture that emerges is an ambivalent one. In An Area of Darkness, Naipaul expresses Gandhian philosophy which arouses curiosity and enlightens us. However, what Naipaul could not accept was blending of religion with politics in Gandhian political
philosophy. Naipaul goes still further in rejecting the legitimacy of Gandhian philosophy in the present day context. What astonishes Naipaul in that philosophy is that poverty is raised to the status of divinity? But the sight which takes away all his sense of appreciating India is the dirt and filth, which can be seen all over. He seems to be absorbed with it and wonders that if anything in India can be beauteous? He does not turn his eyes away from the atrocities which the caste system which has been enforced on the society. What seems to be lacking in his assessment is, lack of deep study and understanding of Indian psyche. Even in the midst of all sufferings the poor do not give away their integrity. Naipaul’s observation about India appears to be skin deep. His reflections are outcome of his visit to places where he takes a detached outlook of Indians and their condition. There seems to a lack of man to man relationship while adopting this stance. Naipaul’s *India : A Wounded Civilization* is an outcome of his visit to the subcontinent in 1975. This was the time when emergency was imposed in the country.

He stayed till October 1976. All his observations and comments were brought together in it. This book repetitively raises problems like Brahmanism, Hindu religion, Gandhian philosophy and many other issues which were dealt in *An Area of Darkness*. In fact it appears to be an extension of this book. But his book *India : A Wounded Civilization* does not have maniacal curiosity with which he came to India in 1962. His emotions and curiosity appears to be subsidiary. There is less of tumult and more of analysis while making his impressions, about Bombay. He points out at the neglect to accommodate those labours who had built the city:
…the city was not built for the poor, the millions. But a glance at the city map shows that there was a time when they were invited in. (IAWC 59)

But then his reaction over a large fleet of beggars is a relaxed one. He compares them with the beggars in the west and finds no difference in them.

However, when he says begging is: ...precious to Hindus a religious theatre, a demonstration of the working of karma, a reminder of oneself and one’s future lives. (IAWC.58)

Some say it is his existing Brahmanical moorings that make him so vocal. He tries to prove himself an agnostic to be well taken by the western reader.

The beggar themselves, forgetting their Hindu function, also pester tourists; and the tourists misinterpret the whole business, seeing in the beggary of the few the beggary of all. The beggars have become a nuisance and a disgrace. By becoming too numerous they have lost their place in the Hindu system and have no claim in anyone’s. (IAWC 58)

Naipaul seems to have matured after his visit in 1971 to India. The over flowing streets of Bombay and the pavements full of night sleepers do not bother him any more. His tone is subdued as compared to the frenzied one in An Area of Darkness.

Naipaul doesn’t seem keen to get drawn towards the past glory of Vijaynagar.
If Vijaynagar is now only to name and, as kingdom, is so little remembered (there are University students in Bangalore, two hundred miles away, who haven’t even heard of it), it isn’t only because it was so completely wiped out, but also because it contributed so little; it was itself a reorientation of the past.

(IAWC 15)

Naipaul on seeing the remains of Vijaynagar holds that the invasion and conquests stand for the intellectual depletion. Naipaul never endorsed the historicity of India. He believed that Indians lack sense of history. Probably this might have stopped him from establishing an identity with India. All the glory and splendor of Vijaynagar does not persuade him to get impressed with it. He could not stop in asserting that : Hinduism had come to an end, and in some ways had decayed, as popular Hinduism so early decays, into Barbarism. (IAWC 16)

Naipaul keenly remarks that unless Indians unfastens themselves from their past, they cannot get aboard in their journey to development. He does not seem to take a serious note of the industrialization that India had achieved after independence. Naipaul asserts :

The crisis of India is not only political or economic. The larger crisis of a wounded civilization that has become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to move ahead. (IAWC 18)

Naipaul’s critique on religion leads to highlight his disregard for religion in his article ‘Naipaul : A Case of Bizzare Reputation’in the book The Functions of Criticism in India :
He has consistently rejected religion. He is pleased in India: A Wounded Civilization that “a hundred years (from India) had been enough to wash me clear of my religious attitudes.” I had not known that religion was such a filthy thing that he could not dismiss it with relief while what he really needs to do is to expiate a pettiness. He is not in need of reminding that washing will not clean memories any more than it did to poor Lady Macbeth. Was he unaware of the irony of such a remark what with its unmistakably Shakespearean over tones the image ‘clean’ conveys? In India: A Wounded Civilization he dwells on the “Forgotten Empire” of popular Hinduism which has decayed into Barbarism. Mr. Ananth Murthy provides the stick for Naipaul in his widely known novel Samskara, where a meat eating Brahmin living with his untouchable mistress was denied the rite of cremation by his caste. While I have known such men being censored and excommunicated by Swami’s and village head-men, I haven’t heard of such inhumanity as denial of cremation to a dead man, and the body allowed to rot for three days in a small village in South India. But Naipaul was looking out for just this kind of material – he has newspaperman’s nose of stench. The artistic accomplishment of Samskara is clearly beside the point for Naipaul and Ananth Murthy can not feel placated by the emphasis Naipaul places on its theme. (NACODR 139-140)

V.S. Naipaul receives a severe reaction from some writerS when in India: A Wounded Civilization, he designates India as a nation without ideology and even Gandhi could not succeed in it and nor did India. The problem that looms
high above is neither political nor economic, rather it is crisis of a decaying civilization. They don’t seem to enquire about social issues outside the Indian tradition. And politics has just become a game for counting number of heads. He also points out at the triviality of Indian Press as it could not detach itself from the anarchic system. About a scientist he says: The scientist returning from abroad regains the security of his caste identity and the world is once more simplified. (IAWC 45)

He was charged for being indifferent to India whether decayed or prospered. He was just trying to win the admiration of the west for which he has picked up his pen. But this may be taken as too much of reaction. Infact Naipaul has tried to portray the darkness that envelopes the country, which is a staunch truth. Naipaul however seems to be taking a distancing stance from India when the talks of moments of his understanding of Northern Bihar: “Bihar for centuries the cultural heartland of India (‘Bihar from Vihara, a Buddhist monastery), now without intellect or leaders” (IAWC 27-28)

However with Naipaul quite contrary to most of the Indian writers in English, he was impressed by Mrs. Gandhi:

Indira, Mrs. Gandhi, that formidable lady in New Delhi, who had done a de Gaulle on the Congress and taken over, who has abolished the old consensus politics of the congress. She had declared war on privilege; her appeal was to the poor, the untouchable and the minorities. She has nationalized the banks, she has de-recognized the princes, and to deprive the princes of their privy purses, she intended to change the constitution. (IAWC 47)
Although Naipaul accepted the accesses of emergency with tight lips but also could not resist from repenting over her death, as she remained his favorite politician. Quite contrarily Rushdie treated it as midnight which could not end for two languages.

Naipaul on studying Naxalite movement, an ultra left, Communist Party of India (Marxist Lenins), a break away group of CPI (M), of the seventies in West Bengal and Andhra Pradeh, was an intellectual tragedy:

A tragedy of idealism, ignorance and mimicry; middle class India, after the Gandhian upheaval, incapable of generating ideas and institution of its own, needing constantly in the modern world to be induced into the act, science and ideas of other civilizations, not always understanding the consequences, and this time borrowing something deadly, somebody else's idea of revolution. (IAWC 92-93)

Naipaul makes the spurt of separatist forces as gaining ground in India. He is startled to see that in a city like Bombay people especially minorities' communities live in ghettos, which delink any interaction between them. And this is all the more alarming in a city like Bombay. One reads the feeling of sympathy for minorities as with it if he is trying to identify himself, but in a different setting. However he speaks at the time when he was financially secured. Speaking about Sikhs he delves into the cause of alienation from the main stream. He finds tremendous dissatisfaction against culture in India: A Million Mutinies Now. He says:
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. (IAMMN 321)

In his book *India: A Wounded Civilization* he talks about the springing of Shiv Sena into prominence in the last ten years. It is a story of rising of an edifice from rubble. He called them Xenophobic (IAWC 62)

He defined Bal Thackray: theatricality of its leader, a failed cartoonist who is said to admire Hitler. (IAWC, 62)

Infact he considered Shiv Sena and Anand Marg, the two as identical and having roots in militancy.

On visiting India in 1988 he immediately is taken aback by the change that has stepped into it. However his disillusionment starts growing on looking Bombay from close quarters, Naipaul in *India A Million Mutinies Now* said:

Only small dark men in an undifferentiated crowd, and dust fumes might see, between the concrete blocks, a mist of makeshift huts and the parasitic shelter those huts spawned, one kind of dependence leading down into another; might see what look like unending smallness of men. But here in the corporation chamber, in the saffron and cross words of the Sena, were the emblems of war and conquest. (IAMMN 6)
This startling sight bereaves him to the extent that he looses all sense of belongingness. Independence that was won on the supreme sacrifice of millions seemed to be slipping away from the grip. He says:

It made the independence struggle seem like an interim.

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, Punjab. All over India scores of particularities that had been frozen by foreign rule or by poverty or lack of opportunity or objectiveness has begun to flow again. And it was easy to see how someone like the man in the hotel, who had grown up with another idea of India and its developments, could feel alienated and insecure. (IAMMN 6)

Infact Naipaul’s journey to India every time fills him with the feeling of alienation. The motto behind traveling to India is to trace his roots, his identity in a country, which his ancestor had left in 1880. We can see his anger broiling on not being able to match the image of India which he carried before coming here in 1962. One can also see his lack of understanding of India history, in India: A Wounded Civilization. However there is feeling of startlement in watching India of 1988. He takes a mellowed down stance about rising fundamentalism in India in India: A Million Mutinies Now. He takes an insightful and analytical look into the socio-political movements of India. And probably one of the reasons of this evolution is his visit to educational institutions like Shantiniketan - a University established by Tagore. Naipaul stands in contrast to Naipaul but appears to be
in vogue with Kipling in ideological approach to India. We can say that instead of just recording his impressions, Naipaul has been able to blend the awareness of Indian heritage.

The question of understanding real India for centuries had been the puzzle that kept historian, sociologists and writers pre-occupied. Its vast and kaleidoscopic culture with tribes still maintaining with the ancient one has drawn many to it. This blend of Dravidian, Aryan, Turks, Mongols, Pathans, Arabs, Persians, Parthians, Greek, Dutch, Portuguese, French and English have provided greener pasture of infinite expanse to the writers. It is the only living civilization carries a fine admix of all the above races. Its sphinx face has led writers to the state of perplexity. The writers like E.M. Forster expressed in his novel *A Passage to India*: How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried but they remain in exile. (APTI 135)

The nation is so queer that it is really difficult to understand. But Naipaul takes an omniscient stance by trying to make a comment on all the aspects that seems to weave a composite Indian picture. But on observing from close quarters, Naipaul has knowingly or unknowingly has missed out “spirituality” of India, which is a panacea to all the of the evils modern world. The theory of Karma takes them to take its refuge in critical times. The other vibrant aspect of Indian culture is that it not only has Buddha or Shankracharya, but has Kautilya and Vatsayanas too. The practical wisdom of Panchtantra, and the socio-economic oppression of the marginalized has not been probed with much seriousness by V.S. Naipaul. V.S. Naipaul’s novels on India makes one believe that they are mere passing remarks of a rootless person caught between Scyla and Hydra.
Naipaul cannot but reveal his distaste for what India preaches and what it practices. In doing so, the ugly part emerges out more prominently. He is aghast over the paradox of strict discipline being imposed on cleanliness and people living around littered with filth and defecation. He repeatedly asserts on seeing such irony in *An Area of Darkness*:

> It is well that Indians are unable to look at their country directly, for the distress they would see, would drive them mad. Indians defecate everywhere. They defecate, mostly beside railway tracks. But they also defecate on beaches, they defecate on the hills; they defecate on the river banks; they defecate on the streets, they never look for cover. (AAOD 74)

In fact his rearing in Trinidad and migrating to England for purchasing better fortunes distanced him from knowing the real world. Thus when he makes his trip to India he gets dismayed at every sight. He just can’t resist expressing his distaste regarding India, when he says:

> “I bolted the door pulled down all the blinds, trying to shut out the howls of dogs, shutting out intruders, all those staring faces and skeletal bodies. I put on no lights. I required darkness”. (AAOD 227)

V.S. Naipaul tries to explore all the areas which have drawn him to travel India. He tries to look at the brighter area that has pulled the entire world towards it and that is spiritualism. He takes up a journey as a visitor to Amarnath, but then instead of getting overawed by the journey and the cave he
gets dismayed over the passivism that is generated in the entire gamut of the holy pilgrimage. For time and again he keeps attacking the philosophy that perpetrates such passive attitude responsible for its own miseries. He says:

...the ability genuinely not to see what was obvious, with others a foundation of neurosis, but with Indians only part of a greater philosophy of despair, leading to passivity, detachment and acceptance. (AAOD 198)

Naipaul has practically tried to dig every aspect of truth that makes the Indian society. He somehow tries to have an incisive look of a social scientist when he says:

...A handsome young Muslim boy, a student at a laughable institute of education in an Utter Pradesh weaving town, elegantly dressed in the style of Nehru, even down to the button hole, had another explanation. Indians were a poetic people, he said. He himself always sought the pen because he was a poet, a lover of nature, which was the matter of his Urdu verses; and nothing was poetic as squatting on a river bank at dawn. (AAOD 70)

When at times he is charged for having made a craven flight from the stark realities, he still sounds serious when he looks at the pathetic state of India in which it is in. He attributes it this way when he visits India during emergency:

The turbulence in India this time hasn’t come from foreign invasion or conquest; it has been generated from within. India cannot respond in her old way, by a further retreat into archaism. The
borrowed institutions have worked like borrowed institutions; but
archaic India can provide no substitutes for press, parliament and
courts. The crisis of India is not only political or economic. The
larger crisis is of a wounded old civilization that has at last become
aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual means to
move ahead. (IAWC 18)

Naipaul sounds quite disconcerting about voicing his concerns when he
comes across child labour devoured by utter poverty. He is charged for showing
his levity instead of expressing his empathy for the down trodden although he
somehow poses himself to be their voice:

“\[In the morning in the rain I saw young child labourers using their
hands alone to shovel gravel to a waterlogged path. Groundnuts
were the only source of protein here; but the peasants preferred to
sell their crop; and their children were stunted, their minds
deformed, serf material already, beyond the reach of education
where that was available. \] (But Science, a short time later, was to
tell me otherwise from the Indian Express : “New Delhi, 2
November Delivering the Dr. V.N. Patwardhan Prize oration at the
Indian Council of Medical Research Yesterday, Dr. Kamla Rao said
certain hormonal changes with the body of he malnourished
children enabled them to maintain normal body functions… Only
the excess and non-essential parts of the body are affected by
malnutrition. Such malnourished children, through small in size are
like ‘Paper back books’ which, while retaining all the material of the
original, have got rid of non-essential portion of the bound editions”. (IAWC 35)

Somehow Naipaul appears to repudiate that religion has been an exalter for Indians. He cannot hide his contempt for religion as he believes that religion has decayed into Barbarism. *In India : A Wounded Civilisation.* While making a mentioned of Ananthamurthy’s Samskara, his aversion for religion intensifies where he sees that cremation is denied to the ostracized Brahmin who had married an untouchable. But critics treat it as another ploy of a writer looking to sensationalize his Western audience.

Naipaul appears to be quite contradictory where on one hand he rejects the validity of upholding caste system as it no longer serves the social purpose of division of labour:

...Every man is an island. Each man to his function, his private contract with god... This is caste. In the beginning a no doubt useful division of labour in rural society, it has now divorced function from social obligation, position from duties. (IAWC 42)

Although at times he tries to be the mouthpiece of the underprivileged, oppressed, yet at the same time his levity for this class effervesently gets exhibited when he says: Reserving government jobs for untouchable helps nobody. It places responsibility in the hands of the unqualified... (AAOD 85)

Here it can be seen that his slither always puts him under suspicion whether it’s yet another masala for his western audience or is it Brahmanical blood that bubbles up at frequent intervals, asserting its supremacy.
Naipaul disconcerts his readers by expressing his disregard for Brahmanical order, which has done larger damage to the nation in his shibboleth. In *India: A Million Mutinies Now* he says: The Brahmins let the country down, during all those dreadful invasions by the Mohammedans. All through, they went on chanting their prayers, their havans. God will protect us. (IAMMN 400)

The critics put him in the category of post-modernists who deliberately want to confuse his readers. Yet another set of critics designate him a picaro whose understanding of thing changes after travelling a few hundred kilometers.

Probably the darkest side that haunts him is the poverty that is littered all around. It’s probably a reminiscent of his days in Trinidad and his initial years in England, where to make ends meet was task in itself for him. And years of accumulation of riches had given him a safe refuge from the tormenting experiences of the past. But the very sight of poverty makes his forehead puckered up with memories of the yonder years. It’s one thing for which he comes down vehemently upon the Indians, who eulogised poverty instead of eradicating the biggest social evil that had led his fore-fathers to sever their ties with their motherland, and to go in for search of work as indentured labourers.

Salman Rushdie’s candidness in talking about decadence keeps featuring in *Midnight’s Children; The Moor’s Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. But what is more remarkable is his outburst in his novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* that: “the only people who see the whole picture are those who step out of the frame”. (TGBHF 28) He takes a detached and a dispassionate view of the entire scenario. It appears at one end that there is an
expatriate conflict. Probably what has driven him away from India only draws him back towards it. The dream of building up a fortune by talking about dirt stricken, corruption laden India becomes the source of generating riches, popularity and fame for him. One can essentially see an ambivalent attitude or a love-hate relationship with the culture of his origin. One can see flashes of portraying the grandeur but Rushdie picks up the seamy side of India in terms of corruption, decadence, and dying moral values. This becomes the usable material for the creative writers. What strikes one is adopting of omniscient narrator’s stance which takes him up on the platform for one where he can open a window on mystery that is India.

Rushdie exhibits master craftsmanship in weaving myth and reality of India together that it magnetically pulls the reader towards it, unlike many Indian movies or movies with cathartic effect. Rushdie takes a reverse stride by depicting glory that was India and come to an India to be the glory of a bygone era. In Rushdie one can see a fountain of creativity, emotions and marketing acumen. He picks up a product and he develops it with finesse. He reads the Western psyche with great precision. A society superfluous of resources would always be pulled towards the one that is devoid of it and especially when it is India which has long tradition of cultural richness. For them it is a story of “Riches to Rags”. But then as we have seen that his emotional moorings for the estranged nation with special reference to Bombay can be seen in his interview with. Vijay Kumar in the article Doing the Dangerous Thing : An Interview with Salman Rushdie edited by Meenakshi Mukherjee, said : Every visit to Bombay, for me, is like home-coming. Yes, I did have those feelings. But that’s true of any place of one’s childhood, it is in the same country, or in a different one. (DTDTAIWSR 213)
About picking up all themes by Rushdie of an Urban India with Bombay at its epi-centre he confesses that it was the spirit of Bombay that enchanted him. Secularism was one trait on which Rushdie had great faith. He pinned all his future hopes on India. It was a living example of multiplicity and leak proof to dogmatism. But the Babri Masjid demolition and communal riots in Mumbai leaves him a disillusioned man. In *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, he expresses his desperation over the suicidal path which the writer has chosen. The fixed idea of the pluralistic, modern malleable, multi-lingual and multi-cultural India also reverberates in his novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. He portrays Bombay as a cosmopolitan city tied together with “Mumbai Ki Kachra Patti Batcheet”. He yearns for the Bombay of British times. Some where in the novel he says: ...let them have their independence elsewhere, but leave us one Bombay under beneficent Parsi-British rule. (TGBHF 234)

His nostalgia for the name Bombay remains surfacing throughout the novel as he calls it by the old name and occasionally mentions of Mumbai as something to do with lesser qualities. He agrees that the solidity of the ground beneath the feet of India as a nation remained till it cherished good communal relation, something which it prided in. It rendered India the status of a quake free zone without a fault line, with special reference to Bombay. It starts earth quaking when Piloo Doodhwalas, M.A. (Probably Shiv Sena Militants) started harping on a discordant note. The entire picture of the nation that emerges is that of a cracking, gaping and sitting at the brink of a catastrophe.

Rushdie by adopting omniscient stance tries to wear the garb of saviour. He blows caution horn by calling these as torchy times for the subcontinent.
When the sensitivities on a permanent alert because of new found militarism, he warns Indians not to be supplicant to religious dogmatism. He forecasts that once stepped over the precipice one can find the blessed kingdom of air. This is better than belonging.

The other area where Rushdie expresses his dejection in the banality of the civilization can be seen especially in Bombay. He attributes this debasement to the modernity that has shamefacedly wrought changes in Bombay. It has given a character typical in nature, where he says in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*:

Bombay forget its history with each sunset and rewrites itself a new with the coming of the dawn. (TGBHF 92)

Transition has become the major feature of it. Rushdie wants to escape away from the violence encompassing the world. He alludes that sudden burst of sky-scrapers in the city has snatched away peace from it. Rushdie draws a line of differences between himself and Marquez. He designates Marquez as the writer with rural sensibilities where as he is diametrically opposite from him in delving deep into the urban psyche. Rushdie is aware of the fact that urbanization is tacitly related to materialization and evasion of moral and human values. There is a sense of nostalgia for the past which treasured all this. He is exasperated to see Ameer Merchant (representative of modern man) willing to destroy all that is beautiful, for the sake of profit. Here one can see a dichotomy in his reflections. Rushdie who himself left India in pursuance of material gain now talks of lesser qualities of such modern India.

Rushdie is also awe-struck in observing the loss of innocence. He realizes the change creeping in. Thus Aurora Zogoiby unlike the traditional
Indian mother undergoes a remarkable transformation. She is portrayed as vocal in asserting herself, flamboyant, as Mother India. She stands contrastingly before the motherly image of mid twentieth century. The sensibilities of the readers are frequently tested by presenting intermittently post modernistic image of Indian woman. While Nalini Natrajan finds a paradox existing in Indians where a woman has to perform at two layers both contradictory to each other. She alludes this to Hindi movies one Mere Mehboob, in which the heroine is always veiled representing orthodoxy and on the other hand is a student of the university depicting modernity. In another instance in film Pakeezah (1971) the camera focuses on heroine’s feet, while she is in a train. Thus these two scenes covering and uncovering are two opposing facts where she has to satiate Rushdie, in woman nation and narration In Midnight Children’s said:

...male psyche need for scopic/sexual gratification yet her the figure head for national culture, guarded by the censors. (MC 168)

Rushdie is well aware of camera technique which uses with meticulousness in his novels, as this has tremendous reader pulling, effect. His women in The Moor’s Last Sigh and, The Ground Beneath Her Feet are post modernistic characters. He intentionally picks up women characters so as to titillate the western world that the once upon a ‘Bhartiya Nari’ has undergone manifold transformations. The Indian woman who had captivated minds and hearts of writers, artists and media has undergone deconstruction. The image of ‘Bhartiya Nari’ by sages, in Ramayans and Mahabharata, the ideal for the society, is seen breaking shackles from these patriarchal and oppressive systems.
Rushdie has a strong antenna that keeps catching the socio-economic changes going around the world, with special focus on India. Globalization, liberalization and privatization have sown the seeds of changes that were once sown after independence. This has influenced every aspect of Indian life. These aspects are psychological, political, social, economic, cultural and ethical. The biggest change that has swept the society unawares is the daring and blazing attitude of Indian women. The Indian women are no more submissive, sacrificing, kind, loving and faithful to husband. In *The Moor’s Last Sigh* they are: ...an image of an aggression, treacheries, annihilating mother who haunts the fantasy life of Indian males. (TMLS 139)

Aurora is a one ruthless, treacherous, manipulative and revengeful woman. She avenges Abraham by paying him in terms of infidelity, rendering blood for blood justice. The marriage institution is no more sanctums.

Rushdie intentionally introduces such instances so as to jolt the readers trapped in Bhartiya Nari image. One can not see emotional logic of the characters. Rushdie deliberately uses the contrasting admix of personal perversities of his protagonist with their glorious participation in freedom struggle.

Rushdie skillfully brings in Uma Saraswati before the readers. She resembled ‘Bharatiya Nari’ who is a radical, advocating the cause of Hindus. This is a turn around of ‘Bharatiya Nari’ from the moderate to an extremist Hindu. The participation of Uma Saraswati (probably Uma Bharati) in Indian politics has fractured the multi-cultural mosaic of Indian polity. But a greater damage that has been inflicted on it is along the social lines. The once upon a binding force of the
family and society has stood up to level down every secular institution. What troubles him a lot is that these oppressed women in India have turned into a radical one and who will lead the Indian society from the front in the coming years. One can see Rushdie cautioning Indians about these post modern women like Aurora Zogoiby, Mira Apsara are the treasures of the modern India.

Rushdie seems to be suggesting that all that is modern is corrupt. This undercurrent can be tacitly felt in his novels. Dealing with other areas of decadence, ‘corruption’ is another virus if once allowed to grow unchecked swallows up the nation. His prophecy has come true that India is on the list of top ten most corrupt countries of the world. In Midnight’s Children, T.T. Krishnamachari the then Finance Minister, in Nehru’s Ministry, is charged as the initiator of corrupt practices in India. Ironically, Feroz Gandhi protested, but this hastened the process of deterioration of relationship between Nehru and Feroz Gandhi. Unfortunately, Indira Gandhi undid whatever he had done. Rushdie declares Indira Gandhi as the Kingpin of corruption for establishing corrupt practices in India. Rushdie introduces to the banal of characters – turned demigods, modern politics. There is a striking description of corrupt practices of Laloo Yadav, P.V. Narsimha Rao in The Ground Beneath Her Feet. Piloo Doodhwala, who is no other than Laloo Yadav, a corruption incarnate... Is unshakably ensconced as scam Baba Deluxe.

Rushdie hesitates in revealing how money in the name of development and welfare is gulped down by the politicians and bureaucrats. There is a satirical reference of ‘Chara Ghotala’ in The Ground Beneath Her Feet. Piloo Doodhwala masterminds a project of rearing cattle in the plains, is an imaginary
project. This is just to draw Rs. 100/- per goat per annum in the name of subsidy. We can see a greater collaboration between the politicians and the criminals emanate when Rushdie refers to the policing of the scam area by the criminals and the bandits. When the truth about this is revealed before a journalist, they coolly eliminate him. Rushdie’s concern intensifies and it also haunts him; it is the percolation of corruption into judiciary. In Midnight’s Children, Ahmed Sinai while conversing with Amina says : “So you have told Ismail to go to court; very well, good, but we will loose. In this court you have to buy judges”. (MC 206)

Rushdie somehow tries to justify his decision of running away from India by consciously or unconsciously including theme of decadence on his novels. He does not have any sphere of Indian life unexplored; however skip deep he may appear. He brings to focus the electoral fraud. The year 1957 is marked as the flash off point of electoral frauds, when communist party emerges as a single largest opposition party. This communist peril was taken seriously by Indian National Congress. And from here onwards the tactics of wooing electors started. He criticizes that this power lusty politicians acceded to the demand of partitioning state of Bombay into Maharastra and Gujarat. He keeps spreading images of dis-orderliness rampantly as it gives a knee jerk effect to the readers. Fredric Jameson in his book *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* says :

The social totality can be sensed, as it were, from the outside, like a skin at which the other somehow looks, but which we ourselves will never see. Or it can be tracked, like a crime, whose clues we accumulate, not knowing that we are ourselves parts and organs of this obscenity moving and stirring zoological monstrosity. But most
often, in the modern itself, its vague and nascent concept begins to awaken with the knowledge function, very much like a book whose characters do not yet know that they are being read. (TGA 114)

Rushdie also deplores the unpardonable deeds of politicians, who, in order to see congress of Nehru and Gandhi return back to power either lures the ill paid government teachers of remote areas or force them to drop down to their knees. He, while committing himself to stand away from the happening sometimes gets emotionally carried away over the emergency issue. His abhorrence made him designate as sorceress incarnate. Whereby using one baton she arrests all the major leaders, school teachers, lawyers, poets, media men, who tried to cough against her. Emergency he claims as the darkest period in India history when civil rights were kept under suspended animation.

One may accept or reject his allegorical allusions as history is not meaningless, but its understanding has to be anchored in faith. Commenting on this Maurees Quilligam in his book *The Language of Allegory* says :

*The reader is posed a choice, moreover, which defines the reader, not the book he is reading… Whether one affirms a belief, or a belief in doubt, both choices are ethical, and while the mere fact of choice is not truly action, the self awareness induced by the recognition that one has, in fact chosen is the kind of experience which underpins action. (TLOA 265)*

Rushdie tries to become the true interpreter of its maladies by doing a microscopic study of all the happenings, the criticism of division of state on linguistic lines. He reprimands the country for their nepotism and not being vocal
and critical of the gross misconducts of the governent. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, he holds Indian attitude responsible for the permeation of corruption and decay in the Indian political system: This all accepting attitude of Indians, led to the acceptance of Emergency, the biggest blot on the country as: ‘Chlata Hai’. (TGBHF 245) Rushdie is master in displaying various roles. As a doctor he diagnoses in *Midnight’s Children* that it is the confused mind of people which muddled the morality – the desire to do what is right and popularity – the more desire to do what is approved of.

While blaming every Indian responsible for the decay, Rushdie can not wash off his hands from sharing the responsibility. He himself becomes fugitive. Rushdie in his narrative tries to take the seat of Buddha, the metaphor of renunciation, indifferent to the happenings and acts of politicians and bureaucrats. But then his renunciation has negative connotation. One can see the blending of functionality of the history in Neil Ten Kortenaar’s article *Allegory of History: Rushdie Midnight’s Children* edited by Minakshi Mukherjee says:

> that his novels... expose the functionality of the nation and of its history, but the denial of the possibility of literal truth does not deny the nation. Where there is no truth we must put our faith in fictions. All we have are fictions, but some fictions deserve our assent and others do not… (AOHRMC 38)

Thereby raising, such issues he tries to involve every citizen in the debate by throwing multiple distortions and decaying picture before them.

Rushdie somehow has an eye of a political analyst who gets involved while scanning the ills that have percolated into the Indian polity. While
incorporating the mythical characters from Ramayana, who stand for demonic qualities, which alludes to the moral degradation that has swept the nation only a few years after the independence; and the departure of the leaders who led the struggle from the front. Somewhere in the heart Rushdie wants to steal the limelight, or he has reveled in controversies and yet at times he has tried to stir the hornet’s nests. On a very close look, Rushdie has read the pulse of the readers and his grasp of their psyche is tremendous, especially the western readers. He knows that it needs to be a writer par-excellence to bring out the concerns and problems of the western societies. The very competition for the writers of the land would lead him to anonymity. And yet there would he a non-acceptance in the western educated societies to let the writer from a different place to sound their concern.

It appears that Rushdie has examined his ground thoroughly and remains decided over his area of concern. In fact to write to opulent societies about the opulence and riches of other societies would not interest them. But then to write for the societies without any background of civilization and especially about the civilization that they are zealous off, would interest the western readers. And the excitement doubles when it’s the downfall of a civilization, which is boastful of its rich cultural. Thus he picks up his canvas and spots the darker patches in a way that the patches become the canvas itself. In doing so he exploits in the fullest measure the inherent comic possibilities in the English language. Myths, fables, allusions, condrums, there is an amalgamation of these ingredients into an integrated purposeful prose. When he laments about the loss of multiculturalism growing intolerance, this in itself is perplexing for them; as they consider India as
to be the cradle of human civilization where one can see various civilizations in a
single framework. A nation known for its benignancy and tolerance has suddenly
become livid with shut doors and windows. A nation seething with hatred; a
nation that had shown that here the highest human ideals can be lived by
resorting to democracy; can be grippingly under the control of maniacs refusing
logic and sense to prevail. Especially in the land where there was no restriction
posed on the enquiry of the highest truth, and even the least detail was dealt with
seriousness. There is yet another thing that would interest the western reader is
the decadence in values, whether it is corruption, electoral frauds, autocratic
behaviour and infidelity. These are the topics that he astutely throws before the
western readers, since they had always been secretively admiring these highest
values which they were devoid of. It’s for these reasons that they had been
crossing seven seas to have a sip of this ambrosia which kept the nation living
for so many centuries. For as we have dealt earlier that Rushdie had bid adieu
to the nation in search of riches, he is very much focused on spinning money.
And so it appears that the image of decadence is scattered intentionally all over
in this writings. But there Rushdie evokes an ingenious devices by using
mimicry For he knows that to be adopting a totally anglicized voice may not
allow him in wearing an English identity, so he adopts to mock the colonial
subject, nevertheless he tries to retain his identity, by twisting and turning, rather
‘chutnifying’ the language of the rulers as well. This in a way is done as a
balancing act on a tight rope, over which he performs. At the same time he
wants to get rid of the stigma while he gets identified with the unruly and
decadent Indians. He seems to be suffering from the complex of living in land of
rulers, once-upon-a-time-masters. His position is that of a man on cross roads
who at one time wants to shed off his Indian identity but at the same time there is an element of rejection by the racists westerners, the land to which he yearns to belong. It is rejection that makes him an ascetic – a prophet, who tries to objectify his reason by getting disillusioned with India. Thus a lot of synthesis and antithesis might have taken place before churning out the thesis in which everything appears, and it thus justifies his flight from the nation.

Gita Mehta’s *Karma Cola Marketing the Mystic East Marketing the Mystic East* is another work that critically incises the frivol some and banality of the entire business that goes on between spiritual gurus of India and their western disciples. She brings before us the wide gap that exists between their spiritualism and materialism. The claim by Indian gurus of superiority of mind over body pulls these disciples for instant spiritual gain. She satirically treats it as a barter of Karma with Coca Cola. In one of the instances the Indian Guru tells his western disciple: ...you have the Karma, we will take the Coca Cola – a metaphysical soft drink for a physical one. (KCMTMC 103)

Gita Mehta’s *Karma Cola Marketing the Mystic East Marketing the Mystic East* is a critique on the modern day superficiality of spiritual and other modes of living. She unhesitatingly voices the hoax and intrigues of the fake Indian Gurus who promise their western disciples of instant Nirvana. This game of milking their western disciples by the Indian Gurus is an act of treachery. Since these soul seekers are mentally and emotionally torn that they take a jet to buy peace salvation. They say: …to escape from that terrible (western) world where everyone is mind tacking everyone else. We left home to get away from that shit. (KCMTMC 64)
There is another remark by one of them: The fact is that I did not really come here to get here, I sort of drifted here to get away from then. (KCMTMC 64)

One can also see her as a cross cultural critic who satirically expresses her concern or seeing these Westerners boarding planes to get quick emancipation, and how reason and religion have become the commodity of entertainment. These fake gurus have made it messier by offering confusing salvation and self-realization. This has resulted in depletion of ancient and sacred values which it boasted of holding. *The Upanishads* were conscious that such knowledge should not be passed on in the hands of fools as it would have devastating effects. In *Karma Cola Marketing the Mystic East Marketing the Mystic East*, Gita Mehta shows how these so called Gurus keep befooling innocent people and intellectual simultaneously. She expresses her distaste over this hoax that these gurus live. She calls it violence when these gurus prescribe remedies to their disciples which are contrary to their conduct: “The next day I went off to hear God’s morning discourse. Got sat in a cushioned swivel chair with a blue denim hat on his head and spoke about revolution". (KCMTMC 29)

Thus we can see the Indian gurus selling spiritualism for want of shoddy things, and glittering gold.

Gita Mehta laughs over the act the gurus perform:

The Guru’s following over the last few years has become so extensive that he now has to give benediction from a helicopter. On his birthday, hymns of praise burst from the
throats of a million earthbound believers, addressed to the little orange speck of certainty waving down at them from a flying machine in the sky. (KCMTMC 104)

This implies that over the last few years they have become so extensive that they have to give benediction from a helicopter. Gita Mehta also unveils the method, adopted by Guru’s to confirm the masses about the existence of God: The guru informs them, through the medium of a simultaneous translator that God exists because if you look in the Oxford English Dictionary under the letter G, you will eventually find the word God. (KCMTMC 104)

There are Gurus who make predictions of apocalypse in the future and of a Third World War. But they see perfection in everything although they are threatening: You are sitting on a volcano. Never before was if so dangerous. And you think, what are you doing meditating you will know the taste of deathless!. (KCMTMC 103)

This Guru is reckoned to be a thinking man’s Guru.

Gita Mehta mocks at the ways these Gurus adopt in bartering the western material gains for so called spiritual wealth they hold. However her satirical outbursts have the undercurrents of human concern. She takes a detached look of the entire situation when a Guru who has an ashram, with a larger number of followers in the Western India, confesses to a correspondent from time magazine: My followers have not time. So I give them instant salvation. I turn them into new neosanyasis. (KCMTMC 102)
While remaining emotionally distanced from such happenings she can be seen lamenting over the cultural decline of the country to which she belongs. What perturbs her more is that an Indian Airline luring westerners by this advertisements in foreign magazines: Nirvana for $100 a day. (KCMTMC 102)

Gita Mehta calls it an east west encounter. She goes on quoting Jung: It is quite possible that India is the real world and that the white man lives in a mad house of abstractions. (KC186)

She treats these abstractions necessary for the white man without which they would integrate in India. She adds to Jung’s verdict that Indian’s are same as anyone else in handling the reality. The non-discriminatory stance of Dharma in India is that chaos and order, moral-immoral is considered as the eternal process of becoming. There is compulsion of action so that you become the law. For Indians she says:

“If the white man lives in a mad house of abstractions, then we live in a mad house of distractions. But we give our distractions philosophical names, such as Bhakti Yoga, the meditation of adoration Hatha Yoga, the meditation of physical endurance. Tantra Yoga, the meditation of the senses. Guru Yoga, enlightenment through the Teacher. Reincarnation, enlightenment through rebirth”. (KCMTMC 186)

Gita Mehta is a writer who is also sensitive over the political happenings of India and keeps a vigilant eye over it. She condemns Indira Gandhi in her
novel *Snakes and Ladders* for declaring emergency. In an interview on 5 April 2002 with C.J.S. Walia for *India Star Review of Books on Snakes and Ladders*, when asked if she holds Indira Gandhi responsible for creating Bhindrawale, and the anger she expressed over the killing of innocent Sikhs in Delhi in November 84. She said:

“When I called Indira Gandhi loopy, I think that it was an act of insanity for her to suspend democracy. The emergency was insane behavior.

We all know that Bhinderwale was backed by the government in Delhi run by Indira Gandhi and her younger son in order to throw out the legitimately elected Sikh government in Punjab. And then the monster she had created could not be controlled”.

Gita Mehta is a writer with political and social sensitivity. She is bold enough in directing blows against the government in compromising over larger social issues for petty political gains. When interviewed by C.J.S. Walia for *India Star Review of Book on Snakes and Ladders*. It goes like this:

C.J.S. Walia – Here is one you explicitly wrote about in the book:

In 1985, the Supreme Court of India granted an Illiterate Muslim woman maintenance payments for herself and her children from her husband who had divorced her. The landmark judgment applied to all Indian women. But in 1986, to win the support of fundamentalist Muslim voters, Rajiv Gandhi used his brute majority in Parliament to pass a new law. Hence forth, Muslim women would be subject to
medieval interpretations of the Shariat Islamic religious law, on marriage and divorce.

C.J.S. Walia – Are you for a uniform Civil Code in India?

Gita Mehta – Absolutely, absolutely. No question about it. (file : iiib.../

India Star Review of Books-Gita Mehta. An interview by C. J. S. Walia)

Thus Gita Mehta emerges as a writer who is not just writing novels to make her fortune from it rather she is a writer with a hawk’s eye in picking out socio-political ills prevailing in India. These ills are regressive and this finds expression in her novels.

Gita Mehta in *Karma Cola Marketing the Mystic East Marketing the Mystic East* selects mind churning themes, where on one side her lucid prosaic style and on the other side there is a curious mind of a journalist. She with her scalpel like pen and acid like wit lays open those unexplored exploitations of the recent times which is how Indian culture is bought and sold by the west. She also exhibits the abuses by Indian holy men, the sex, drugs and promise of moksha. Her rising from skepticism to rationalism can also be seen. She remains to be a writer with incisive satire yet she remains deliciously funny.

There had been an intentional practice by the writers of British Origin to paint a bleak picture of India. In truth these were the writers who tried to build a negative notion of India and in a way were partially successful in doing so. Somewhere in their mind these writers had the aim of subduing the ruled caste to subjugation. There was an element of racial superiority with which English expatriate writers wrote. It was also justifying their occupation of India by highlighting the weakness that existed in the social, cultural and political areas.
Thus this stench of decadence tried to prejudice the minds of the readers to which even Indian expatriates remained influenced with.

The expatriates whom we have taken for our research work have the traits of colonial masters of looking at the seamy side of India. However there are instances when they assert their identity by bringing out the glory that was India, or depicting India in real terms not falling under the good or bad, glorious and ugly category.

The British made efforts of not educating Indians specially in rendering Western knowledge. They felt challenged in creating such an intermediate class, which sometime would dislodge them of the ruler’s throne. However the situation compelled them to train a few Indians who would just take dictates and not reason out like them.

The problem which the British expatriate writers had in depicting India was their lack of understanding of the native culture. However they did not make an effort in establishing communication with the native and segregated themselves as whites, superior, courageous, wise and cultured and the chosen ones who had to rule and establish order in the world. This lack of understanding of native culture has created problems in their writing. Although the colonial and post colonial Indian expatriates dissociate themselves from this category, but we see that somewhere with these expatriate writers like Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul and Bharat Mukherjee failed to comprehend native culture. Most of the ideas were acquired from either books or hurricane visits to places of their interest, or their stay in India with very little interaction or
communication with the native. They remained indifferent to the regional literature and the poets and writers. They remained in their ghettos with natives ostracized, thus creating an atmosphere of imperialism in post-independent India. Thus with all the candidness with which they present the dark side of India, they always fall short of authenticity. Their description of poverty, squalor, dirt corruption, communal hatred which are the curse of Indian society is true, yet there are times when people see ghoulish glee in doing so. There are times when we can see that by doing so they invite the curiosity of the readers of the west—a part of marketing strategy. Yet we cannot deny that there are many intrinsic weaknesses which make the image India—a problematic one.