

**A Vision of Land in V. S. Naipaul's An Area of Darkness and Mark Tully's India's Unending Journey: A Comparative Study**

**Brijesh Kumar Meena**, Research Scholar, Department of English, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. 313001.

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**Abstract**

The British and Indian cultures, which had a significant impact on Indian people's attitudes and responses to the outside world, are shown in Naipaul and Tully's writing. Readers can see how this culture affected Indian citizens after independence by comparing and contrasting the two writers' reflections in their writings, one of which is negative while the other is positive. The diverse cultures of these countries have merged to create a new culture within the nation due to the changes in the country's structure brought about by colonization. Its inhabitants changed their way of life and thinking about the world as a result of adapting to the new culture. This subject is elaborated upon and analyzed in this article so that readers can better understand the diverse cultural fusion that existed in India at the time. It discusses the two countries' respective cultures, the point at which they mixed the outcomes, and the significance of each. The combination of modern British culture with traditional Indian practices, including spirituality, altered the course of the nation and its destiny. Due to this profound cultural change, the post-colonized Indians had a very different perspective of the outside world. Travelling to different areas, learning about many genres, and attaining great heights in various fields are some of the advantages of cultural fusion. Naipaul and Tully interpret how cultural influences on people affect them through their travelogues, which cover both positive and negative outcomes. They did this while in India.

**Keywords:** Travelogue, Cultures, Post-colonization, Spirituality, Destiny, Perspective

**Introduction**

Journeys are a convention and negotiation of alterative. Travelling leads to a conflict of similarity and dissimilarity, implying encounters by posing travel from a different perspective and disseminating information gained by travel, identification and alterity, and self and others. Susan Bassnett is one of the foremost translation scholars of the world and has emphasized the connections between translation and travel most emphatically. According to her, translation is a kind of voyage, from one point in time and space to another; a textual journey that a traveler

can pursue in fact. Furthermore, both translation and travel writing are hermeneutic practices that include exploration, identification, and discovery processes. Both practices include intercultural interactions of all kinds. Travel inevitably requires some translation, and many early travel accounts aim to describe the new and foreign language to explorers.

When many parts of the world experience globalization, displacement, and post colonialism, travel writing has become a severe analysis representing some of our time's most significant concerns. Travel writing, today, spans various formats, such as field articles, academic papers, guidebooks, memoirs, comics, and lyrical reveries, and it is a primary topic for debate across many deliberations in the humanities and social sciences. Carl Thompson states that travel writing should provide contrasting meanings and core controversies in a wide variety of historical studies from the medieval to the contemporary period, exploring the autobiographical aspects of travel for both women and men and discussing a range of canonical and more marginal works, both colonial and postcolonial.

Thompson explores travel writing as an ideal preliminary point for young scholars while also giving new insights to those familiar with the field. He articulates that travel writing should include core discussions in the fields of postcolonial science, gender, sexuality, and visual cultural need along with historical and cultural backgrounds, that track the creation of tourism writing through time, and cultures should be a part of it. He also emphasized imagined geography and how travel affects the physical, intellectual, and frequently fictitious structures that give rise to the many parts of the globe that we can observe.

An Area of Darkness (Naipaul, 1964) is a travelogue detailing Naipaul's voyage through India in the early sixties. His first visit to his ancestral country conveys the confusion and disillusionment of the writer. Whether he is discussing India's national language, metro cities, T. V. channels, restaurants, films, tailors, or even houseboats, this travelogue is filled with criticism. Naipaul appears to have a pre-determined notion that they are all speaking against India. Even though he appreciates ancient Indian culture, there is a continuous critique that Indians do not respond to or appreciate the rich heritage of India. He admires Gandhi's vision, who blamed India for seeing beggars and shameless pundits and condemns the absurdity of doctors, lawyers, and journalists. On the opposite, the sarcasm of Mark Tully is not dialogic. Instead, it is the culmination of a trip that unravels the mysterious motives behind many of India's political and social problems. In his novel, Tully's tone is soft, wise, and packed with empathy for his subjects. His friendship with this nation is visibly powerful as he wants to grasp the things that motivate it. He tries to capture the spirit of the nation. His speech facilitates conciliation and mediation and his writing concludes a chapter on globalization and exudes the peaceful message that the middle road is the safest after all.

Travel writing is an exercise of self-promotion, particularly for contemporary literary travel writers who share their views worldwide. Although, being so adaptable as a medium of travel writing, generalizations of any sort are unnecessary. Debbie Leslie respects the heterogeneity of the genre in which some blanket remarks are ignored. Writers face a difficult challenge in providing an account of locations identified one way or the other by the readers. Therefore, while discovered remain unknown, or to restore curiosity in familiar locations, now

seen from a fresh enlightened viewpoint, they often try to re-explore regions of the globe. Modern travel narratives are more introspective than classical travel writing, and from the outside world to inner conflicts, the perspective of travel has shifted dramatically. Travel becomes incidental, and the writer uses travel to discuss things close to his heart. Modern travel writing involves aesthetic pleasure and knowledge about locations and cultures. It seems like Indians have lost a sense of being and belonging in the crazy race of consumerism, imperialism, and liberalization. It has been mirrored by many modern writers who have travelled the length and breadth of the subcontinent to grasp this country's diversity.

Travel writers create and explain facts from their perspective according to travel theory; for them, this is an exercise in presenting the 'self' to the 'other.' It is an effort to construct bridges linking humanity through different cultures, races, languages, and sex. It also seeks to mirror and consider the unfathomed spaces which remain overshadowed or beyond the text's surface level. With the de-centering of canons and efforts to dislocate the borderlines of fiction and non-fiction, travel writing has come of age. Travel accounts represent essential cultural records they examine the foreign society and its history. The travel writers assume a position between a historian, a journalist, and a biographer, while at the same time capturing their impressions and observations through the 'touch zone' cultural discourse.

Naipaul's Discovery of India in an Area of Darkness

One such famous writer who has written about third-world countries is V. S. Naipaul. He was born of East Indian descent in 1932 in Trinidad and later moved to Oxford for his studies in the 1950s. He went on to remain in London and began writing from there. Based on his journeys around the world, Naipaul has published many significant works of non-fiction. He received widespread praise by receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001.

The first of his acclaimed Indian trilogy is *An Area of Darkness-A Discovery of India*. Posted on his first visit to India in 1964, it is an emotional travelogue. The first few pages of the novel give the impression that it was written from a foreigner's perspective. Any Indian reader would disregard this work. However, as the reader proceeds further; he is able to understand the truth and integrity of this piece of writing. It is difficult to break free from the ideas and notions formed at an early age. The book becomes a fascinating read due to the author's unique history. He was born into an Indian family in Trinidad and spent his childhood listening to Indian songs. He spent the latter part of his life in England, where he developed himself as a novelist. He is a character who has existed in two extremes of the globe and who, for the very first time, is exploring a diverse nation like India. Naipaul had some aspirations and a dim view of his ancestral land from his childhood memories. However, when the experience started, he could not connect at some stage to this nation or its inhabitants.

Naipaul holds a certain distance from his subjects. His art becomes genuine and original through this isolation. It has rarely been seen that a writer with a sentimental connotation to his subjects, is unable to grasp a truthful account of things. Naipaul criticizes almost every part of Indian *An Area of Darkness*. He does not see the rich cultural legacy or the longest-lasting ancient civilization, instead, a nation that has robbed itself of its capital. He does not see the nation that gave rise to so many great faiths but points out how the best principles and values of

faith have been poorly introduced into society. He claims that these ideas and practices have become decadent over centuries in Indian society:

Caste sanctioned by the Gita with almost propagandist fervor might be seen as part of the older Indian pragmatism, the 'life' of classical India. It has decayed and ossified with the society, and its corollary, function, has become all: the sweeper's inefficiency and the merchants' short-sighted ruthlessness are inevitable. Every man is an island; each man to his function, his contact with God. This is the realization of Gita's selfless action. This is caste (Naipaul, 83).

Poverty is not new to the author; he passively embraces it, and he witnesses the unhygienic lifestyles, squalor, and diseased human circumstances. His study of the paralyzed caste system and its effect on culture is quite valid. An Eastern understanding of dignity and work focused on symbolic action: the caste's dangerous, decayed pragmatism. But the destruction of the latrine cleaner and the casual defecation on a veranda that Gandhi witnessed in 1901 lies at the heart of the scheme, but the fact is that Indians do not see these squatters and may even deny that they exist with total sincerity, a collective ignorance resulting from India's fear of waste and pollution.

He understands the mentality of blindly embracing traditions and never challenging one's system of belief. He sees a nation whose people are proud to belong to the oldest and most enduring heritage but are very reluctant to rise. The critique of Naipaul reaches into every part of Indian society, language, persons, and history. No defeatist mentality escapes his eye, even the sly Indians' practice of fleeing to avoid the crushing fact of living in the land of fantasy. He thinks, had Indians been aware and less ignorant about their past glory, they would not squat in the middle of their ruins and would not suffer as the way they do now. But, for the ignorant Indians, it is easier to retire into fantasy and fatalism, believe the stars on which everyone's fortunes are written, and look with the weary tolerance of one who has been through it all before advancing the rest of the world. Indian the 18th century was squalid. It urged conquest.

Naipaul notices the effects of the caste problem's quick-fix solutions, and his advice still holds good. He sees Nehru's and other writers' insights into India as romantic. He admires Gandhi and recognizes his struggle and failure. As no Indian could do, he looked at India; his vision was straightforward, and this directness was, and is, revolutionary. He sees what the visitor sees precisely, he does not disregard the obvious. He sees the beggars and the greedy pundits and the filth of Banaras; he sees the doctors, lawyers, and journalists' atrocious sanitary habits. The Indian's callousness and refusal to see is observed by him. No Indian attitude, no Indian problem, escapes him; he looks at the roots of a static, decaying society. Moreover, India's image comes from his writings and exhortations for more than thirty years; this is the measure of his failure. It puts responsibility in the hands of the unqualified; it is the system that has to be regenerated, the caste psychology that needs to destroy. Reserving government jobs for untouchables helps no one. So, the dignity of latrine cleaning and the spirit of service are brought up again and again to India. Naipaul thinks India undid Gandhi, as with every other

great Indian figure. The nation embraced him as Mahatma (the great soul), but almost immediately forgot his letter.

Naipaul seldom touches India's optimistic side, despite making a few strong valid points, as if he was determined to turn a blind eye to the positive side of things, the book continues to be a straightforward travelogue for the most part. His insight into his topics is minimal. On critical analysis of his subjects, he scores well. However, the author's first impressions remain with him throughout the book. Prose, with small details, often sounds repetitive and banal. He fails to see a nation that has given liberty, a nation that continues to try to find its identity. He highlights the issue but is unable to identify the root causes. He does not capture the fight for life, hopes, and ambitions of a common man. He fails to see the history of earlier Islamic and British invasions and their consequences. The author attributes the static and decayed India's population to earlier invasions. One needs to read the trilogy when mentioning these shortcomings to see the writer's full range of thought.

The portrayal of India by Naipaul is impulsive and anecdotal. His loss is evident in the overall bleak image that comes out of his prose. However, again, this is the essence of a travelogue, as it captures a visitor's real replies. The picture is certainly not complete and lacks many of India's facades. The reader feels sad as an Indian because most of the analysis and criticism of Naipaul is so true that they can't be denied. After nearly fifty years, what he saw in 1964 has seldom changed little. The reader is offended and hurt by his sharp criticism of almost everything associated with India. However, at the same time, it helps to pause and look from a different perspective. Indians may not recommend this book to an outsider because it does not capture her true essence. However, Indians should give it a reading, as it could act as a catalyst for change.

#### Mark Tully as a Travel Writer in India's Unending Journey

The writings of William Dalrymple and Mark Tully become especially important in the sense of portrayal of India in their travel writing by non-Indian. Their emphasis on India's subcontinent is deserving of critical research. Tully's writing in India's Unending Journey consists of travel writing in and around India, and it pays attention to the type of travel literature in ancient times, during the Middle Ages, the sixteenth-seventeenth century, and the eighteenth century to the modern times. In India's Unending Journey, Mark Tully advises readers to believe in scepticism as proclaimed by Indian scriptures. He writes that, the middle path, and contains no absolutes and successfully balances extremes. He espouses modesty as a means of living in harmony. Wandering from this direction will mean closing the door to reality. India has taught him all this, Tully writes, influencing his spiritual conviction along the way. Tully seeks religious leaders and experienced scholars who describe the philosophy, society, and economics — the topics that define India. He urges readers to consider India's path because it "is the path of us all, into a future in which we must rely heavily upon our spiritual and material capital, and aspire to find a balance in the face of uncertainty." (87)

Equilibrium is everything to Tully. Recollecting his school days in a chapter titled 'Marlborough: An Absolute Experience', he says that modesty counted very little. "Rather," he writes about his experience: "it showed me that life was all about trying to be a damn fine

fellow' and raise me without support from anyone else."The Indian belief in providence in academics and sports achievements concerns him, as he believes that to be due to initiative and not God-given talents, circumstances, and past education. This chapter is rooted in reason and does not allow doubt.

He ruminated his thoughts for years after graduation and realized that men are never entirely alone, to doubt the presence of a maker or "sustainer" is to assign priority to human achievement alone. The writer's views on equilibrium lead him to infer from a dialogue that the achievement of success drives people to do something, "Rich boys think they can do anything they like. They have far less humility."(30)

His quest takes him up the common paths stuck between the East-West wealth conflict gap, consumerism's hollowness, and even gyms and yoga, but the reasons are unconvincing. Tully visits a Dalit familiar to him in Uttar Pradesh, who is rooted in poverty for more than ten years and concludes," Proponents of development as the panacea for countries like India claim that the wealth produced would trickle down to the needy, but it was pronounced that little, or no wealth had dipped into Budh Ram's wallet ...." (64)

The presence of poverty looks like a neoliberal loss. The memories of Tully take him to various places, of which Uttar Pradesh is only one; each chapter has a distinct symbolism. The first chapter opens in Puri, Orissa, where he spent the winter holidays as a young boy, the second is his school in Marlborough, and the last is in Varanasi, where Tully reminds us of his mortality. There are lovely passages, including a two-paragraph meeting with Dr. Manmohan Singh. He describes the prime minister's task to make capitalism work for India's progressively implementing reform; taking a step, watching and waiting, before taking the next step, in the same way, that trade in the rupee has been progressively liberalizing. Every decision leaves to another in the process of implementing reforms. Elsewhere, he asks an Indian Jesuit when Hindu nationalism is on the rise, whether the conversion was indeed a mission. The man replies: "The Church does not convert; God does, and God does not seem to regard this as a high priority...." (85)

However, it is the nature of the middle road that it often leaves us less close to a resolution than a firm stance would:

So, what is the solution and how can globalization be made work? The answers may lie in keeping the correct balance between decisions made at the global and the national levels, in strengthening the international organization (which are there are maintain that balance), in ensuring that the market doesn't lead us by the nose, and in keeping the role of the market and the government in balance. (201)

India lies at the heart of this travelogue: Mark Tully discusses the essence of his spiritual convictions. He urges readers to believe in doubts during India's unending journey. He writes that there are no absolutes of ambiguity, the middle path, and scepticism, and are therefore successful in balancing extremes. The writer applauds modesty as a means of right living, wandering away from this direction would mean closing the door to the facts.

For this, Tully seeks religious leaders and experienced scholars who describe the problems that keep the faith, history, and the economy distracted by blind modernity. He urges

readers to consider the trajectory of India because it "is the trajectory of all of us, into a future in which we must rely heavily on our spiritual and material capital and struggle in the face of instability to find equilibrium."(259)

In this novel, Tully's tone is soft, wise, and packed with empathy for his subjects. He is mighty in his link with this land, and he strives to understand the things that drive it. His voice supports dialogue with conciliation and is that of goodwill.

### **Conclusion**

V.S. Naipaul still had a deep understanding, which he fine-tuned according to the need for his imagination and the circumstances. His frequently-revelatory historical instructions circumvent India's polyphonic historiography unswervingly. As contrasted with Tully, his writing is more intimate. Consequently, whereas, Tully recedes by encouraging 'other Indians' to tell the region's stories and complex oral history, Naipaul not only claims in his India's trilogy, *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* but also in his other works that India has not yet sought a philosophy of rejuvenation, even after these long years of liberation, intellectualism, rebellion, and war. The essence of his work is pessimistic, painful, and side-splitting accounts and these are the disclosures he gets through India, like a traveller. As a people's writer who expresses their feelings and emotions, he writes thus, "India has no autonomous intellectual life. Many millions who have waived a fair share of independence now look away from India for ultimate fulfilment. They are primarily looking at Britain and the United States. They are looking at the United States in particular."(191) He wants India to "shake off the retarding indigenous element in dhotis and caste-marks, temple-goers, to use a kind of shorthand, bad in English, and as an element that becomes bigger and more dangerous politically by the year" (192). Naipaul is anxious about the breach between the indigenous and the developed. He doubts whether the travelogue is finding a more expansive dexterous establishment space to help India understand its complex self. He thinks, "India is rigid and materialistic,"(193)on another occasion. He highly criticizes the misunderstanding between the two cultures, India's suffering and colonial experience.

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