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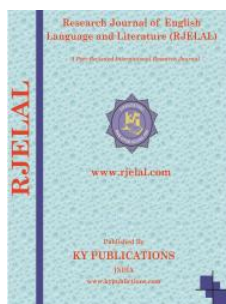
INDIA'S DEGRADATION FROM THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE IN NIRAD C.  
CHAUDHURI AND V. S. NAIPAUL'S SELECTED WORKS

Dr. NIDHI TIWARI<sup>1</sup>, SUNDHEE LAL MARKAM<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor, RIE, Shyamla Hills, Bhopal (M.P.)

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Barkatullah University, Bhopal (M.P.)

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ABSTRACT

In the colonial period Indians learned to explore cultures, traditions, and religion through imitating English writing. Western anthropologists and explores were studying mankind of Indian sub-continent. The dominating tendency of man had caused several barbarian fights and divided people in caste, color, and region. The disparity had begun in the Indian society with the establishment of traditions, social rites and rituals. Child-marriage, dowry, and sati were social evils which degraded the country. Even there was gender discrimination in the Indian society while in primitive culture gender had not been a grave issue for their society. Casteism was coined by Aryans that had four major classes. These four classes were absolutely social but later these became political phenomena. There were several disputes among themselves due to casteism as the superiority and inferiority complex had raised up there. This was a psychological problem inherited from generation to generation among Indians. Indian kings from the Gupta period kept on fighting with each other and gave advantages to Mongols, Afghanis, Persians, Mughals, and Europeans to invade the whole sub-continent gradually. Throughout history, India could not remain a single entity but experienced frequent deviations in her political and geographical maps. Numerous kingdoms were established by kings and had declined with the time. Those kingdoms were as separate countries because they had their own cultures, traditions, languages, and identity as well.

**Keywords:** Degradation, dogma, casteism, partition, suppression, primitive, corruption.

Introduction

Warfare and colonization were changing the image of the country for centuries. She was invaded by several alien capricious and ambitious warriors. There had been several wars between natives and alien people from prehistoric period. Indian diversity reveals several ethnicities, races, dogmas, and languages, those were not from the same hereditary root of the anthropological population exist. In Indian civilization, people had

been associating themselves with geographical identities for centuries, not with any religion. During the colonial period, Indians began to use foreigners' names or titles expressing gratitude to foreign cultures. It was because some kind of acceptance of alien cultures were useful for their lives. Majority of Indian population seems to have faith in Hinduism so called the oldest religion. Though there were several creeds, which were not completely similar to each other but had some kind of correlation in faith.

Various sects within a religion confused all because a geographical identity had been developed to be the common identity and faith without any discrimination of caste, color, and region. Ultimately it was accepted as a religion. When the whole world was seen in the view of '*VasudhaivaKutumbakama*' then certainly it had intermingled people. Several traditions within the societies distinguished and never allowed women, and castaway people in shrines to enter for worship. People always believed in supernatural powers, God, Satan, magical texts. The concept of religion was narrow and had limitations within society. Both the writers Nirad C. Chaudhuri and V. S. Naipaul came from Hindu families observed degrading factors in the country. They had seen or learned historical, religious, social, cultural, ethnic and linguistic degradation of the integrated country. The ancient text Upanishad has a Sanskrit phrase, *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* that failed to bind or integrate Indians together in one identity. Indian philosophy and religion had taught to observe the whole world as a family. The separatist groups and subjugating ideologists always provoked public for partition. In the consequence, two novice nations had come into existence in the twentieth century. Bigotry type of nationalism also suppressed citizens within the society, country and made the country defiled in the eye of Indians as well as foreigners. Since ancient time India had been a significant place of knowledge as the oldest universities Taxila and Nalanda introduced the whole world by archeology of those ruined buildings as well as infrastructure. Communal riots, hatred among ethnic groups, castes and religious communities had taken the test the tolerance of India.

#### **Social degradation:**

Social degradation was initiated by casteism while caste system was genuinely a classification of professions, people did in the ancient time. Caste had become significant in Hindu social life. Every caste was identified by their professions and it was by their own interest not by birth. Castes were never harmful and mean as they were prejudiced. By duty 'Karma' of the person was considered for the caste in Hindu society. Thousands of castes and sub-castes exist in the Hindu caste

system. Even other ethnic groups were too divided into several subgroups or caste. Indian society cannot be imagined without castes because these are used as the identity. And people have become habitual of their caste as they have been enrolled in schools and government office documents. By birth, a man takes a caste biologically and continue until he is dead. A man has to be identified by birth that what caste he was born in. The fraternity of people had to be recorded generation after generation. It is said that in the early stage caste was an identity of occupation, not clan or generation. People began to follow caste system normally and continued their ancestral occupations professionally. It caused to be rigid and gave rise to several atrocities based on caste as high caste, and low caste. The discrimination was observed among people of different castes even religion. People were bounded to their caste and applied limitation for marriages. Most of the people search life partners for their sons and daughters within the caste. Caste is a dominant factor in Indian society. Nirad C. Chaudhuri married to Amiya who was chosen by his father. He remained to be a 'Bhadra Lok' a Bengali term for a gentleman. His marriage was as per the Hindu society in East Bengal.

They could not allow their sons or daughters to marry out of their caste. Inter-caste marriage was never allowed in any caste. People love their own castes for the relationship and avoid marrying from another caste especially lower castes. Inter-caste marriages were considered to be a bad marriage as Willie Chandran's parents' marriage was a bad marriage in the novel *Half a Life*. They would not give preference to others since they had been taught orthodoxy of casteism. In the novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *Half a Life* and its sequel *Magic seeds* Naipaul has created real Indian characters, who were bounded of the caste system and had to marry within their own castes. Casteism made the problem of getting good match-making. It initiated dowry, child marriage within the caste in every Indian society. Biswas was expecting for dowry when Mrs. Tulsi approached him to get married to her daughter Sama. He was working in the store run by Pandit Tulsi's family. In fact, he had become a victim of casteism as Mrs. Tulsi found it the best chance to

have good match-making within the caste. Naipaul dealt with inter-caste marriage and arranged marriage in his works in the Indian context. Mr. Biswas's sister had eloped with a lower caste boy and his mother was ashamed of it due to her step taken against the caste system that was nurtured well. Some people liked to follow Gandhi for his ideology of equality for 'Harijan' a category Gandhi had propagated them to be equal to all. The protagonist of the novel Willie Chandran's father had married an unfortunate woman to make her his equal. In the preface of novel *Halfa Life*, Naipaul wrote:

A royal servant, a university student, a man of caste, decides one day to be a full Gandhian. He thinks it behoves him as a Gandhian to marry an unfortunate woman and give her a hand up, make her his equal. (vii)

Casteism is a very complex and fundamentalist understanding of self-love. It is said to be introduced by Aryan race in the Indian sub-continent. Mostly, those four categories were of themselves including *Dalit* or untouchable. Apart from Hindu caste system primitives and other foreigners were considered to be *Malechha* means out of their caste that is, mean to the Aryan race. The Aryan race concept introduced that primitive people were discriminated by the color complexion. Color complexion showed white race superiority over dark people there. The Sanskrit term *Malechha* clarified that indigenous people and their cultures had been influenced by Aryans and other ethnic groups who had invaded the sub-continent. Nirad C. Chaudhuri called those Aborigines the children of circe. In the book *The Heart of India* Chaudhuri described:

Nevertheless, they might well have been unhappy, for human reasons in addition to the climatic and zoological.... Besides, they had to face the implacable enmity of the Aryans, who hated them as agricultural folk hate hunters, as dwellers among fields and pastures hate foresters, as plainsmen hate hillmen, as fair people hate the dark as civilized men hate savages. (63)

Chaudhuri was disappointed with Bengali social life because there was much hypocrisy on the base of caste and class. People distinguished among themselves and divided their own people that became the weakness of different sections. It was observed that the Hindu of the modern world to be true as it was of the Aryans in 1000 B.C. The attitude of the present Hindu ruling class was as the Westernized Hindu in British imperialism of the twentieth century. They had been trained as clerks, security personnel. Of course, Satyendra Nath Bose had qualified Indian Civil Service in 1863. Rarest of Indians were given administrative posts in the colonial age. This was an entry of Indian intellectuals who were trained in abroad to run the British Government in the country. Only the English authorities had high positions in all the sectors. Babu English tradition had been in progress in Bengal. Those English educated Indians who could serve in British offices were called in Bengali term *Babu* for a gentleman who can deal with his own people and British. They worked as a bridge between British and natives. Nirad C. Chaudhuri too had served as a clerk in the Accounting Department of Army in British India. Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and Rabindranath Tagore were eminent writers of Indian writing in English. But ancient knowledge was hidden in Vedas and Puranas composed in Sanskrit. Foreign scholars had come to acquire knowledge in Nalanda and Taxila universities. Those were centers of learning in an ancient time, where from all the Buddhist monks and learners from abroad shared knowledge and philosophy. Indians remained lethargic for their prehistoric acquaintance but alien came and they had accomplished knowledge from Hindu philosophy, Vedas, Puranas, and Smritis. The foreigners' accounts on India were not authentic as in *The Heart of India* Nirad Chaudhuri expressed his disagreement:

All these men took together supply a very impressive amount of information about today's India, and if the value of any kind of knowledge was to be determined solely by its volume the outside world should be well

informed about us. Yet the unexpected truth is that it knows even less about what really exists and is happening in India than it does about the countries behind the so-called Iron Curtain. (13)

The world's knowledge about India was obtained from the Westernized and urban upper middle class who had become the heirs of British rule. Those people didn't have much knowledge as Chaudhuri disagreed because they misrepresent and lie. He opined that Indians always depended on Western writings to learn the country and knowledge of ancient India. Foreigners had written various accounts on India since Marco Polo, Megasthenese, Ibn-e-Battuta, Albaruni, and Hiuen-Tsang like foreigners had visited and they had written some significant accounts. As the oldest religion of the world is called *Sanatan Dharma*. From the colonial period, the new name was coined as Hinduism. Indians ignored two main things were Hinduism and agriculture. Hindus themselves did not respect their own religion and even ancient knowledge that was described in their religious books and epics. In *The Heart of India* Chaudhuri expressed his concern regarding India and Indians as he opined:

For one thing, they have their trusteeship of the people of India, which I looked upon their exploitation, to justify. This makes them prone to misrepresent and even to lie. But it would be a mistake to think that as a class they deceived intentionally. They are so completely imitative of the West, so dependent on current literature written in English, mostly by foreigners, for their own country, so ignorant about the original sources of knowledge, and so formed by their urban upbringing that the whole of traditional and rural India remains outside their ken.... the two things in India they ignore most and even dismiss as unimportant are Hinduism and agriculture. (20-21)

#### **Aboriginal degradation**

In the name of development and industrialization, primitive people had been

detached from the lap of nature. Where there were abandoned natural resources, industrialists did not do justice with them. The joint steps of Industrialists and Government degraded their cultures, traditions, snatched their treasures- water, wood, and utopia. Their human rights have been ignored from British time as well as in the post-colonial period. In the collaboration of the industrialist's government had to sanction military operation against some of them so that they might be driven away. In the transculturation process, they were neither assimilated in the Hindu society nor were understood to be human. After independence in the Five-Year Plans, their destinies had been kindled as the welfare and development plans were proposed for them. From ancient time, Hindus hated them frequently without being disguised. In his book, *The Heart of India* Nirad C. Chaudhuri quoted their attitude or declaration, "Oh, Dark is Dark, and Fair is Fair, and never the twain shall meet." (65) The color complexion among Aryans and Aborigines were attractive as well as hatred. The contrasting situations were created in life. Undoubtedly, their lifestyles varied. The racial hatred had been established from 1000 B.C. There was a tradition of maintaining distance from primitive because they were considered to be *Malechha* (impure) or untouchable. By their contact hunter king and his people might be polluting them. Their superiority complex measured them to be impure and below their race. The relation of both the races had been in a position of love and hate as one story from Ramayana dealt about Sabri. This event disclosed a human relation among different races. Rama presented love and chivalry towards that huntress lady called Sabri by eating plums. Another story from Mahabharata also brought everyone's attention about Eklavya a hunter boy, who was deprived of education by Guru Dronacharya. The boy had proven to be the best in archery but Dronacharya's hatred resulted to cut his thumb in alms. This deceitful way and hatred continued in the modern days so Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had his view regarding accepting them to be human. In *The Heart of India* Chaudhuri quoted Nehru's suggestion, "they are to be treated as human beings." (64) Chaudhuri seems to be sympathetic towards

suppressed people in the country. His political experiences enforced him to write those circumstances existed in the colonial and postcolonial period. His view was that of making aware, his own people to be ethical as the Hindu religion teaches.

### **Political degradation**

Nirad C. Chaudhuri and Naipaul have described all those conflicts within the country. In this geography politically known as India, Bharat, and Hindustan. Though two prominent names India and Bharat were constitutionally mentioned to be the domain name of the country. One name Hindustan is very geographical and beyond any differences but the political map of the country conceptualized to be the land for Hindus that is understood to be the oldest religion instead of 'SantanaDharma'. The Orientalist had coined Hinduism for the religious identity of the majority of the people in the Indian sub-continent. From thousands of years, clashes have been going on among Primitives, Hindus, Muslim, and Europeans. As Muslims divide the world into two as the Hindus do with India. One is Hindus and the other non-Hindus. In the view of ancient, Arya Bharat and Anarya Bharata. A long run conflict among Hindus and Muslim might be observed as communal riots. Naipaul's opinion was that Muslims inventions had destroyed India and her culture. After the partition of the country turbulence in India is self-generated by Indian themselves, because that wounded old civilization made it so. In *India: A Wounded Civilization* Naipaul stated:

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. Her 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 large crisis is of a wounded old civilization that has at last became aware of its inadequacies and is

without the intellectual means to move ahead. (8)

Generally, people might be heard saying that Muslims have destroyed Hindu temples and also converted people into their religion. Both the communities have self-consciousness from centuries and their enmity equally sustained. Analyzing these two ethnic groups Chaudhuri remarked them as the same race people. In *The Heart of India* Chaudhuri stated their relationship:

I have seen and read about murder, arson, loot, and rape on the colossal scale arising out of Hindu-Muslim clashes, and I have read simultaneously that there was no reason whatever for these because the Hindus and the Muslims were technically and culturally one (31)

Dominating and exploiting political system often ruled over people of weaker and divided one. "Divide and rule" politics distinguished people in various sections. Ideologically they were brainwashed that who belonged to which caste, class, region, religion, and party. The corruption lies within the politics with an opportunistic view. Emergency in India was experienced by Naipaul during his India visit in the decade of nineteen seventies. Situations were very horrible many politicians were put in jails. The assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi also had caused riots all across India. Those riots killed many Sikh community people in the consequence of two fundamentalist Sikh bodyguards of Mrs. Gandhi who had killed her. Political corruption among Indian themselves could never remove poverty from the country but made the public corrupted by their election manifestoes. The country was looted not only by foreigners but also by Indians themselves. Corruption is the loot through commissions in all the government projects. They suppressed people with hidden political agenda for their own gain consequently poverty, unemployment, crimes and disintegration of the nation came into existence. Different dogmas make people think as a separate nation that is why India faced partition. Social problems are made political problems in the country that also triggered public for violence. Due to the lack of political



determination for national development, corruption, crimes, social injustice increased. Calcutta Municipal Corporation in colonial India was corrupted establishment. Therefore, the author, Chaudhuri was disagreeing freedom from British and wrote like a pro-British while being an Indian. Kings used to fight for their power and wealth. Bravery, prosperity, and expansion of their kingdom were the agenda of aggression. The monarchy period also dishonored Indian sub-continent throughout history.

### Conclusion

Historical and political scenario of the country were factually related to the degradation of the country. The spiritual country lost her identity as the social values were degraded by transculturation, destroying indigenous cultures, suppression of weaker sections of the society, casteism, conversion. Imposing ideologies on others politically also become one of the causes for partition of the integrated nation. Irrespective of Indian intellectuals initiating migration to another world in search of employment as well as better opportunities for livelihood. Poverty, casteism, fundamentalist dogmas of Hindu society towards women, child marriage, dowry and sati like social evils were enduring from time long-established. Communal violence, the increase of hatred among people of different castes, communities, region, linguistic catastrophe, and emergency made India degraded throughout history. The identity crisis of multi-cultural India has been suffering from interlopers from the outside world. The Hindu-Muslim dispute is not recent but a historical problem. Though India was known for her peaceful nature and never attacked any geography in history to outspread her political map. Thousands of monarchies were rising and kept diminishing as well as merging to each other. India was not only suppressed but made hostile for centuries. She was wounded several times throughout history, therefore, Naipaul called India a wounded civilization. Chaudhuri noticed social problems, political corruption, and unawareness of the people towards ancient knowledge. He found Indians depended on foreign accounts for their own historical facts.

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