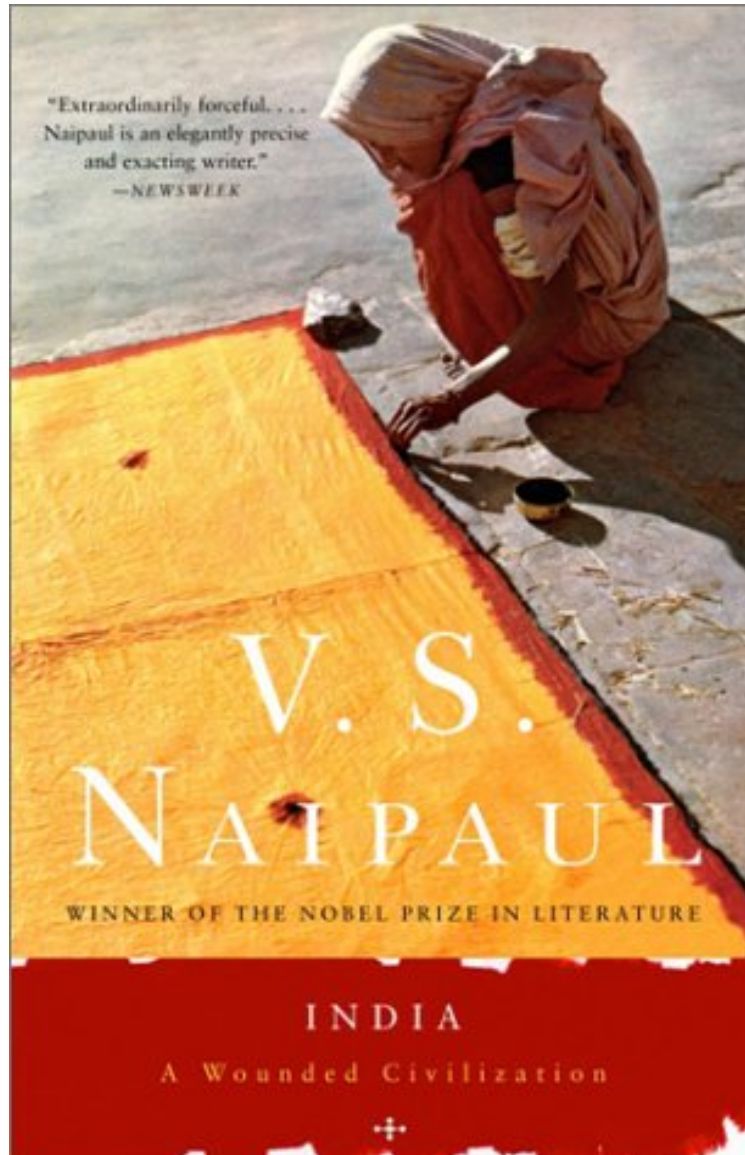


[Ebook free] India: A Wounded Civilization

India: A Wounded Civilization

V.S. Naipaul

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V.S. Naipaul : India: A Wounded Civilization before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised India: A Wounded Civilization:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not amongst his best works -By KolareI picked this book because I liked Naipaul's Beyond Belief and also because I like his prose.The work does not do justice to the tremendous task that Naipaul has set for himself, if that task is to make sense of India's present from its historical path of where it

comes from. Naipaul seems to impute that the religious beliefs of Hinduism are responsible for Indians' easy acceptance of foreign rule, defeat and subjugation, if I got his point right through this well-written narrative of post-independent India's predilections. Hindus, in Naipaul's view are only too willing to 'spiritualise' the experience of abject poverty. This analysis of Naipaul is of course very different from the usual diagnosis of difficulties of running world's largest democracy in which more than half the people were illiterate for most of existence as a independent nation. The aspect of Hinduism that is debilitating in author's view is a certain obsession with the self and withdrawal from outer social world. This made Indians complicit in easy acceptance of foreign rulers and accept defeats spiritually. Naipaul sees this debilitating Hindu thought in none other than Gandhi and his adherents - Gandhi being presented as a self-obsessed man who is ever conscious of his inner workings and impulses while missing to observe or narrate a lot what happens around him. Naipaul is relentless in critically examining India's father of nation. Also a certain lack of historic sense among Indians, and pride yielding long years of subjugation means Indians interpret themselves through ideas of their colonial masters rather than through their own illustrious past. Naipaul has a point here, no doubt. What Naipaul's penetrating observation misses is much more than what it catches - for instance, to say Hinduism is self-centered is a jaundiced view. Any society that has a notion of good and evil has some concept of society and social norms and obligations, and concept of Dharma is just that. Likewise, this land was not always poor and in fact pursuit of wealth, so called Artha among four purusharthas, is one of the goals of Hindu life - wise men as alms-seeking mendicants seeking enlightenment through suffering is a perhaps much later addition to Hindu thought, may be more Buddhist than Hindu in origin. Likewise, while Naipaul bemoans India's loss of a part of cultural heritage in areas such as painting, architecture he has ignored the successful continuation of dance and music. All in all, a laboured and contrived explanation to explain a complex civilisation through a single simplistic idea. Lastly, it needs to be mentioned though Naipaul's prose is as good as I have found it in his other non-fiction works. That to many of his fans makes anything he writes worth reading, even if that writing is only dimly illuminating.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. India will go on
By Vincent Poirier
In 1975, India was not finished, it was wounded. It would recover and go on, as it had gone on for thousands of years. This sentence, India will go on, must have impressed Naipaul. In fact he opens not one but two chapters with this quote from a novel by R.K. Narayan. This is typical of Naipaul's prose. Starting with someone else's words, he superimposes his own voice on theirs and creates what, to my mind, must be the finest contemporary English prose around. Through it, we experience not one person after another, but a whole cast of characters all in layers. Naipaul interviews an engineer who takes him to a village where he is introduced to a money lending landlord and his tenants. In one paragraph we are exposed to many relationships. Naipaul's and the engineer's, then the engineer's relationship with the powerful landlord who could forbid his tenants to talk to him thus making him unable to carry out his land improvement projects. There's the relationship between the tenants and the landlord, between Naipaul and the tenants, and so on. It is almost like an opera which, unlike theater, remains coherent even if everyone is talking all at once. Economy is a mark of great art. The title makes this point too. India was wounded, not dead. But during Indira Gandhi's Emergency, it was in critical condition. And the point is made in four words. India has a long history of art and culture but their natural development was largely interrupted during the British Raj. The forms have remained but the conscious sense of continuity was lost. What remains is the here and the now. The people no longer remember their past but at any moment they feel its presence around them. I've never been to India so cannot say if Naipaul's picture of it is true or faithful. I suspect it is, but that is immaterial. It is certainly an accurate presentation of what he himself thought and felt as a foreign-born Indian returning to the land of his ancestors, and that is how we ought to measure an artist's achievement, by his ability to make us feel precisely what he wishes us to feel.

Vincent Poirier, Tokyo
4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Very good overview of modern India
By Phil (not) in Magnolia
The country of India is of sufficient importance to all of us today that there is a real need for resources to help us develop a greater understanding, whether we are a traveler, business person working with India, or simply one interested in becoming more informed, such as myself. I don't expect that to be accomplished by only one book, so the challenge is to select a couple of volumes which together can do the job. For myself, this book is one that I have selected to help my own understanding of India.

India: A Million Mutinies Now was originally published in 1990, and this edition brings it back into availability, with a new preface by the author. It is the third volume of a trilogy written by Naipaul on India, the first two being *An Area of Darkness*, and *India: A Wounded Civilization*. It does date back 20 years, and for that reason does not take into account the many developments and changes in India since that time, so if you must have something that reflects today's India in all respects, this may fall short in some ways.

Author V. S. Naipaul (2001 Nobel Prize in Literature) is acclaimed both for his fiction and non-fiction. He was born in Chaguanas, Trinidad and Tobago, to parents of Indian descent. In this book, he describes India through a series of stories covering people from many castes and different backgrounds. As these various individuals stories are told, and as you begin to grasp how they deal with the day-to-day problems of living in an overcrowded country, and surviving within the caste system still in place, you find that your understanding of India is beginning to come together. It is a long book (500+ pages), full of interesting vignettes and covering a very wide variety of individuals from all walks of Indian life. If you are considering purchase of this book, then I would also refer you to the comments to the earlier 1990 edition (*India: A Million Mutinies Now*), which

remain valid for this new printing. As alternates or supplements to this book, I would also suggest *India: A Portrait*, recently issued, and I am sure that there are many others. I will continue to add to this review if I do come across other books that I feel should also be mentioned.

In 1975, at the height of Indira Gandhi's Emergency, V. S. Naipaul returned to India, the country his ancestors had left one hundred years earlier. Out of that journey he produced this concise masterpiece: a vibrant, defiantly unsentimental portrait of a society traumatized by centuries of foreign conquest and immured in a mythic vision of its past. Drawing on novels, news reports, political memoirs, and his own encounters with ordinary Indians—from a supercilious prince to an engineer constructing housing for Bombay's homeless—Naipaul captures a vast, mysterious, and agonized continent inaccessible to foreigners and barely visible to its own people. He sees both the burgeoning space program and the 5,000 volunteers chanting mantras to purify a defiled temple; the feudal village autocrat and the Naxalite revolutionaries who combined Maoist rhetoric with ritual murder. Relentless in its vision, thrilling in the keenness of its prose, *India: A Wounded Civilization* is a work of astonishing insight and candor.

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From the Back Cover
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