

Postcolonial Man within the Paradox of Tradition and Modernity: Traversing through Naipaul

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This study examines the failure of decolonization and its political outcome of returning to historical nostalgia that is manifested in the selected works by V. S. Naipaul. It also contextualizes that postcolonial totalitarianism is a by-product of that returning. Post-colonial nations, once abandoned by their former colonial ‘masters’ and then taken over by unsuccessful indigenous rulers, have encountered a symptomatic political development of returning to the past. Thereby, the glory of the past is often used to escape from the humiliations, dislocation, anxiety, jealousies and alienation generated by modern secularist developments, which are often transmitted through colonialism. Such postcolonial nations exhibit a form of “retrogressive nostalgia” in their returning to the historical and traditional essence to address present problems, and this move ultimately results in producing violent totalitarian regimes. Such societies still struggle to come to terms with modernity, although the material conditions of their daily life improve. The mental transformation of subjects in such societies, from the old to the new, remains stagnant and unprepared. This destructive energy used against the new is examined in light of Habermas’ idea of ‘compensation for the pain suffered through the disintegration of traditional forms of life’. This study uses literary interpretation and textual analysis to examine how such symptomatic developments are explored in Naipaul’s work. To strengthen the argument further, it articulates textual evidence with modern psychoanalysis, Frankfurt School Thoughts and a critique of ideology based on the views of critics such as Slavoj Zizek. The study reveals that historical nostalgia rises from the confused and paradoxical transposition of tradition and modernity, which triggers symptoms of totalitarianism to actualize the lost past.

Keywords: *Naipaul, Decolonization, Totalitarianism, Historical nostalgia*