

# Failures of Decolonization and 'Return to the Past': Reading V.S. Naipaul

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This study examines the failures in decolonization and its political outcomes leading to totalitarianism in a transitional post-colonial context as characterized in the works of V.S. Naipaul. It articulates how the post-colonial nations, once 'abandoned' by their Colonial Masters and then taken over by unsuccessful indigenous rulers, encounter symptomatic totalitarian developments within themselves as they have emerged and are embedded in a historically affected consciousness. To escape from the humiliation, anxiety, jealousies and alienation generated by modern secularism and rationalism transmitted through colonialism itself, the once colonial subjects seem to 'return' to an ideology largely borrowed from history and tradition, which ultimately results in violent totalitarianism. In such transitional contexts where societies still struggle to come to terms with modernity, though material conditions of life improved, the *shifting mentality* from one condition to a completely unprepared and unexpected situation remains crucial. The destructive energy that is often used against the universal civilizing force is seen here as a 'compensation for the pain suffered through the disintegration of traditional forms of life' (Habermas 2007: 102). Further, when the traditional societies co-exist with their pre-modern values and fight against "westernized" modernity and secularism 'by means of pre-political traditional religious form of protest' (Zizek 2014: 281), I argue, against Chakrabarty (2000), that the archaic traditional ideologies and practices themselves stand anti-progressive in terms of universal emancipatory politics. Therein, Naipaul's Eurocentric perspective, amidst lot of criticisms, of societies who 'torn between modernism and the return to tradition' proximities towards remaining 'faithful to the universal/secular project of modernity' (Zizek 2014: 280). Hence, Chakrabarty's idea of 'organic unity' (2000) within a society without any stagiast historical progress of universal standards and the denial of "incompleteness" of pre-modern political practices is contested in the light of literary and empirical evidence cited in the works by Naipaul.

**Key words:** Decolonization, Modernity, Naipaul, Return to Past, Transitional Societies.