

Anarchy and Hierarchy in V.S. Naipaul's "Magic Seeds"

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Abstract

Magic Seeds, is a work of fiction, and it is a reflection of the real world. The value judgments in a society only return to their starting point if they change with the reconstruction of a given society. This is how *Magic Seeds* works. As a work of fiction, *Magic Seeds* is also an allegory for India's past, in which value judgments can only be restored to their original state when they are reformed in accordance with the reshaping that society underwent. Joining the guerilla group offers Willie, who is looking for a place to call his own, the answers he seeks. However, he must now contend with the spectre of his past, from which he will never be free. Through the novel *Magic Seeds*, this paper explains how anarchism, and the need for order are all always evolving. In the 1960s, the Marxist–Leninist Communist Party of India in West Bengal formed a political alliance with the Indian Communist Party, and this study examines why an anarchic movement appears to return to its starting point and lags behind the decolonization or reconstruction of a society, due to the deep-rooted and pre-structured hierarchy in a society. Naipaul, as a colonial novelist, has a great interest in the cultural and political aspects of colonialism. Because of his ancestry, he places a high value on exploring Indian history and culture in all of his writing. A Maoist insurgency aims to battle poverty and gain the trust of the poor villagers in post-independent rural India, where Naipaul's protagonist, Willie Chandran, was born during British colonial era. Invoking Bhabha's concept of mimicry, which states that the colonised attempt to mimic the coloniser, resulting in a subject who is nearly identical to his master but not quite. Using information from Dipanjan and Debu in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, this paper attempts to understand *Magic Seeds* as a fictional satire of political mimicry. A Maoist rebel in India, Willie Chandran, is the subject of Naipaul's dissection of the schism between foreign political speech and Indian cultural traditions. There was the role of the Naxalites that effected the conditions in the area.

Introduction

Magic Seeds, one of V.S. Naipaul's most intriguing works, deals with the public's ability to adapt to the system, and the system to the public, only through revolution. It represents a system that has come to a standstill due to social and economic disparity, perhaps due to political leaders and their approach¹. If there was no control over the people, there might be a chance for the system to work better. In such a tumultuous atmosphere, the novel *Magic Seeds* concerns the terrible struggle of the main character Willie, who joins a guerrilla movement in India after residing in Berlin without finding what he

¹Guérin, 1970

desired. When Willie learns about the guerrilla movement in India led by Kandapalli through his sister Sarojini, he resolves to join it to provide meaning to his life. To start a revolution and preserve the rights of peasants and the masses is the movement's primary tenet, however it is a theoretical movement. Willie realises that his past and present coexist, but that the present has already wiped out the past. Unlike his youth, when most Indians, including Willie, were scavengers, sweeping dust and relocating it. Back in India, he discovers that his former guerilla companions, now bureaucrats, are completely dissatisfied with their current situation. Thus, V.S. Naipaul tries to contrast the multiculturalism of Britain with the ambiguity of India, which has persisted since India separated from Britain in 1947². But this is hardly a full break. India still maintains the system inherited from Britain, at least in terms of government control and institutional underpinning. However, the persistent identity issue is a clear fact. That is, turmoil will continue in India. No amount of transitory revolution or political advancement can change the feeble system into a progressive one unless the hierarchical system is changed. As Willie observed in England, turning away from the past and facing the future is the only way to start a new page, a new chapter of advancement. Thus, this paper will discuss the change of hierarchy and anarchy in V.S. Naipaul's *Magic Seeds*.

Hierarchy and Anarchism, in *Magic Seeds*

Naipaul's main goal in *Magic Seeds* is to highlight the neglected anguish and exploitation of the quiet peasants. It is a revolutionary movement of the Marxist–Leninist Communist Party of India in West Bengal. They advocated creating armed militant campsites in rural India and expanding the armed militant campsites to surround urban areas³. Naxalite strategy included the removal of landlords, pawnbrokers, police, and police informants. The Naxalite movement also exterminated people who opposed their settlement of refugees as villages. The Naxalite policy would eventually infiltrate political power in India. Despite the Naxalites' success in driving out landlords, pawnbrokers, and other suspicious persons from rural regions, their victory was slipping as their policies instilled dread of terror or slaughter among landlords, pawnbrokers, and others. Their failure to implement their plans and programmes by the appropriate process and over the appropriate people cost them their victory. So the Naxalites policies and intentions never materialised⁴. From the 1960s until the early 2000s, the Naxalite movement in India saw many deadly attacks and slaughters without attaining any of its stated goals⁵. In *Magic Seeds*, the Naxalite movement is portrayed as an unorganised, chaotic, and idealistic movement. While the movement begins by opposing a hierarchical social structure in Indian culture, it soon becomes a hierarchy among its own members. Declining hierarchy leads to anarchy. As a result, Willie feels unsafe and threatened, and surrenders to the cops. While it is possible to transfuse a system into India that will stabilise conditions and reduce inequality, Indian society struggles to shed its colonial attitude. According to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, every organisation that surpasses its genuine limitations and tends to invade or annex other organisations loses strength and advances toward dissolution. Notably, when a city or region grows in population, it approaches authoritarianism and severity, resulting in disruption. When this type of city produces outside

² (Zahiri, 2014: 168).

³ (Jawaid, 1978: 56-75; see also Gupta, 2007; D'Mello 2018; Samaddar 2018).

⁴ (Jawaid, 1978: 73-75)

⁵ (see Jawaid, 1978; Gupta, 2007; D'Mello, 2018; Samaddar, 2018)

subordinate areas or colonies far away, they eventually become new cities and only associate with the mother city by federation or not at all. If the new city can become self-sufficient, it will declare its independence. Decolonization, according to Homi K. Bhabha, aimed to reclaim land and territoriality for national security and global equality. Bhabha says that decolonization requires the dissolution of the colonial system's compartments. According to Fanon, Decolonization, which seeks to disrupt the global order, is plainly a destructive agenda. Through liberation, the colonised become free men. Decolonization necessitates a detailed examination of the colonial condition. Those who are exposed to this rapid transformation are prone to be thrown from one personality to another. This is similar to Willie Chandran, who thought revolution was the only way out of his country's problems. After being imprisoned and suffering tremendous agonies, he finally realised that this so-called revolution would never produce the whole transformation they fought for⁶. According to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, humanization and decolonization are two ways by which the colonized can reclaim their independence and identity. Injustice, profiteering, violation, brutality, and oppression impede this vocation. The oppressed's great desire for independence and justice, as well as their struggle to restore their shattered humanity, develop this vocation. For the oppressor, dehumanisation means stealing humanity. Dehumanization destroys the quest to be fully human (Freire, 2005: 43-44; see also Thiong'o, 1981; Bhabha, 1990; Memmi, 1991).

As a precaution, Freire emphasises that if humans are dehumanised due to oppression, then dehumanised individuals are not dedicated to the same activity. If dehumanised people operate in conformity with oppressors throughout freedom, their efforts lag behind decolonization. According to Naipaul's novel, Willie finds India to be the reverse.

His erstwhile companions have risen to power, but they appear to be slaves to the prevalent system. So, long-expected change only occurs on the surface. Only the players' names change. Moreover, even if India got independence, it would always tend to replicate the British and therefore the British-created system of economic exploitation. In other words, Indians must create their own true system, less enamoured with what they had and more inspired by what they can achieve. However, when the issue of mimicking persists, it becomes increasingly difficult to break free of this vicious cycle. What is the 'mimicry' that takes place here? Lord Macaulay's recommendation on Indian colonial policies help to understand this. According to Macaulay (1835), "the wealth of European learning should be imparted by 'a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern'" (Macaulay, 2016: n.p.). The colonised reproducing the colonising culture, conduct, manners, and ideals involves both mocking and a threat, so that mimicry is both similarity and danger (Bhabha, quoted in Mambrol, 2016: n.p.). Due to the Naxalite Movement's similarity to the Maoist revolution, Naipaul uses another mimicry in *Magic Seeds*, which concentrates on the Indian people's reaction to the 1947 revolution. In other words, guerillas were following a fruitless Maoist revolution that turned out to be a poor imitation, as seen through Willie's eyes. After defining crucial terms, concentrating on the episodes becomes more instructive. The story starts with Willie who lives in Germany, with his sister.

Willie, an Indian, travels to Germany to start again after spending time in England and Africa. But he fails and plunges into a new start, hoping to discover a steady life and a new identity. He then joins a

⁶ (2-3; see also Thiong'o, 1981; Elst, 2005; for decolonization in India).

guerrilla movement in India. Sarojini, his sister, advises him to return to India and find Joseph, a leader of this movement. When Willie encounters Joseph in a flat, Joseph tells him that people call Indians primitive, but he thinks the Africans are in a lower position. They are themselves. In India the ancient culture is talked about a lot but no one knows what it means⁷. Despite being decolonized, Joseph admits that Africa and India have quite different histories, memories, and awareness. According to Joseph, Indians believe they have a long history that dates back to thousands of years. They are unaware that the West has defined them, and their understanding of the past is limited to what the colonists have told them. Unlike Africans who acknowledge their slavery, Indians seek to emulate Western values and blind themselves to their present reality. Naipaul believes in "a caste system in which part of the population is regarded subhuman, beneath notice, and bound to such jobs as sweeping and taking away the excrement of others" (King, 2003: 65-66). Joseph brings attention to the caste system that has existed in India for centuries. India's caste system, which exists to this day, presents a number of challenges in terms of the development of a collective soul and a unified front. In India, a diverse range of religious beliefs, dialects, and cultures prohibit the country from implementing dramatic reforms. An instance such as this paves the way for the creation of persistent inner struggles as a fundamental component of the Indian national character. Due to the fact that the caste system was at the base of their nation's foundation, it seemed practically impossible for Indians to decolonize and win their independence. Indians must destroy all of their pre-structured orders and systems in order to decolonize their own self-being, including institutions of centralization, law, justice, authority, and all of the primary sources and foundations of power, in order to do this. In order to understand why Indians are unable to decolonize their ideas, it is necessary to discuss anarchism as a social movement that has the potential to educate the notion in the country. To paraphrase, "the term anarchism denotes a set of assumptions and principles, a recurrent tendency or orientation--with the emphasis on movement in a direction, rather than perfection--toward more dispersed and less concentrated power; less top-down hierarchy and greater self-determination," as stated by Ramnath. Anarchism is also beneficial during India's independence process. According to Indians, anarchy and decolonization are lagging behind their intended goals because Indians were considerably late in demolishing all of the order and surrounding institutions that were designed to secure the power of colonisers and oppressors than they were in achieving their goals. If we keep this in mind, the situation becomes more understandable. Joseph points to a female servant in his home and remarks on the impossibility of staging a revolution because of the physical inability and frailty of peasants. They have lost their ability to think as a result of centuries of malnutrition. Apart from social concerns and conflicts within society, physical issues such as physiological power and fitness, which Joseph believes were crucial to the failure of the guerrilla movement, are also important considerations. As soon as Willie joins the movement, he finds that its members come from a variety of social backgrounds, and he comes to believe that his hopes and goals have been dashed as a result of what he witnesses there. Willie learns from the guerillas that they suffered from adversity, depression, and took part in the revolution to make amends by murdering and employing violence. They show little regard for the persecution and poverty of the peasants. Their main goals are personal vengeance and an

⁷(Naipaul, 2004: 38)

escape from prior life. The narrative implies that the insurgents and the peasantry have quite different outlooks on life and perspectives. For example, a guerrilla tells Willie they will miss the jokes which they previously enjoyed. 'You can't joke in the movement. And you can't tease the peasants. They despise it' (Naipaul, 2004: 63). Willie is surprised by poor their military training, which he believes does not prepare them for actual combat. Willie doubts that the movement intends to prepare people to defeat counter-forces. In the camp, students learn to kill an unarmed individual in a simple manner. In a real fight, Willie believes, foes are armed and can fire back. As a result, the camp training seems incomplete and unrealistic. The peasant communities are close to the forest, and the movement's camp is also in the woods, making it tough for the guerrillas to acclimatize to a life devoid of modern conveniences and opportunities. This upheaval is also caused by a lack of distinction between persons at various degrees and conditions. Neither the guerrillas nor the peasants are real. For example, in the context of cultural fusion, Indians appear to be the sweepers who just produce clouds of dust without changing anything. It appears that folks require a shift in vision to break free from the shackles of their caste system and western ideas. The first tendency – that is, the creative, constructive power of the people themselves – should be aimed at building common legal institutions to safeguard them against the power-seeking minority. Anarchism now attempts to create systems that ensure a free growth of society based on modern science and technology. That is, Anarchists and Governmentalists have endured (Kropotkin, 2002: 3). One night, a sentry misinterprets the sound of an animal as an approaching enemy (Naipaul, 2004: 54-55). This blunder shows how the movement members can mistake an animal for an opponent. This has a catastrophic implication for the insurgents. The movement's members are not real peasants and are unaware of their surroundings, which could be problematic in battle. Similarly, Willie is shown adapting to the forest and village life full of small creatures. He is told to wear "slippers" to protect him from scorpions and other dangers, but Willie, used to socks, found them difficult to walk in. His bare heels slid off the slick leather and walked on the ground" (Naipaul, 2004: 57). Walking among these creatures, fearing being stung, is not normal for an outsider in the hamlet, as these creatures are not present in cities. Eventually, socks and shoes are abandoned, and bare feet contact the ground. This is probably not a habit that a novice like Willie can simply acquire.

When a youngster takes Willie to the guerilla movement's camp, they pass through villages where Willie is exposed to true rural living conditions. The author implies that daily requirements and amenities differ between cities and the countryside. Village meals may not be clean and hygienic, and housing conditions may be different from city flats and motels. Due to the lack of materials, meeting everyday necessities can take a villager a long time and a lot of patience.

The author also discusses the movement's views on peasants and how they should be handled. For example, Einstein criticises Kandapalli, the movement's originator. Einstein believes that peasants must be educated via brutality and harsh discipline in order to make them true revolutionaries. His criticism of Kandapalli's theory centre on the lack of a precept ordering peasant upbringing. Because Kandapallibelongs to a high caste, Einstein believes his attitude toward the peasants is based on unrealistic and imagined convictions.

Conclusion

A similar axis of symmetry in the novel shows how V.S. Naipaul thinks about the world. This makes Naipaul want to look at "elimperiondondeel sol" (the world where the sun never comes out), so he looks there. A balance of events can only be achieved with two Magic Seeds, but neither the caste system nor the government can allow a balanced population without an overarching hierarchy. People can only be freed from their roots if there is a rebellion that tries to break the connections between the rulers and the people of India, no matter how rich or poor they are. However, the caste system, which is a cultural value that everyone agrees with, keeps the pyramid system that is held by peasants and labourers in place. Indians, on the other hand, tend to colonise other people because they were once colonised. They repeat what their predecessors taught them. As the Naxalite Movement turns into a political copycat, revolutions don't work, and Indians get stuck in a rut in the middle of their country. Short-term changes will not help in the short term, except if India is willing to bring back the old empire's system. When Willie changed, it seemed like it was just on the surface. India's transformation, on the other hand, seemed to be deeper than the surface. Despite the fact that time has changed his ideas and Willie has changed, he doesn't change himself into a better revolutionary because the past casts a shadow over India: a picture of the Empire. Everything that can be done to get rid of the shadow of the past is making the "Indian Dream" a nightmare. The best thing to do is to cast off and wake up from this nightmare and start again with a new, fresh Indian identity, free from a caste system which is filled with segregation. In order to get rid of the current system, an anarchist structure and a movement that fits with Indian culture should be put in place, as well as a structure that doesn't forget about equality and doesn't give special privileges to some people. If this doesn't happen, like Naipaul's Willie, the character's name or western education will only show a superficial change. The only thing that will change inside, very much like Willie's occidental name, is the name of the system. So, the only thing left to do is to throw out the whole system of India and throw out all the different classifications that come from a big, bad hunchback: the unjust caste system. Before and after India was colonised, there were a lot of rules and hierarchies in place. With an anarchist approach, it will be possible to remove all of these rules and hierarchies in order to reach a certain level of development and keep what can be kept from a modernised India.

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