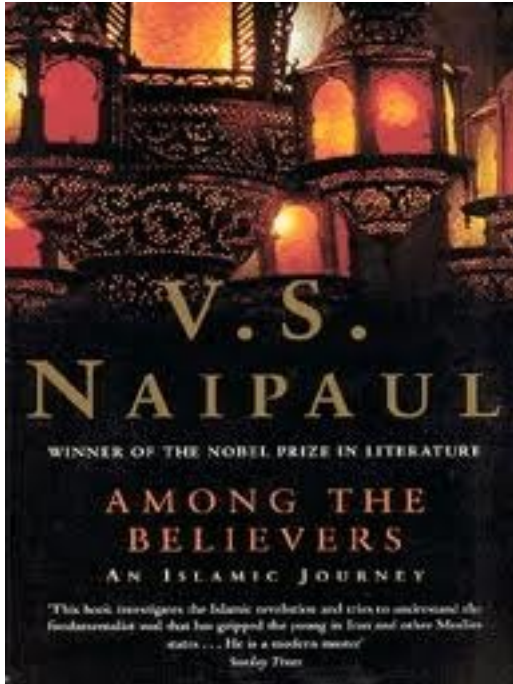

V.S. Naipaul

Among the Believers : An Islamic Journey



Title: Among the Believers : An Islamic Journey

Author: V.S. Naipaul

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Description

An astonishing piece of travel writing and a timely and insightful analysis of Islamic fundamentalism"

Insightful reviews

Louise: Naipal begins his journey in Iran, just after the its revolution. Then he visits Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia and returns to Iran just after the taking of the hostages at the US embassy. He meets educators, writers, government workers, students and the unemployed in cities and rural areas. Some he seeks out, others he meets serendipitously. He asks them about their lives and their hopes for the future.

Two refrains emerge. One is cognitive dissonance regarding the west. It is a despised place of indulgence and evil and a preferred place for an education, trustworthy medicine, consumer products and residence. The other is the view that an Islamic state is perfect. Despite the example of Pakistan, where citizens scheme and lineup to leave, most believe that once a true Islamic state is achieved everything will work out. Naipaul observes that Islamic government as practiced in Pakistan is about punishing with whips and stones, military rule and poverty. Naipaul summarizes the understanding among those he meets as to what it takes to run successful "institutions", "it's as though the world is running itself." He sees some schools merely teaching the young how to be poor. For one school he makes a Dickensian comparison to Nicholas Nickleby.

It may be that the quotes are selectively edited, but they all seem to be within context. Sometimes, concerning the refrains, speakers are asked to clarify, or for others to clarify what was said, or are given a pithy question. In these cases, the original point was usually emphasized and never denied. Some reviewers have implied that Naipaul had preconceived notions before this trip. If Naipaul did begin his trip with a bias, his speakers confirmed it.

Naipaul presents almost no women's voices. They must be half the population of the countries he visited, but they comprise far less than 5% of the book.

The only females with full interviews are two school girls identified by the color of their robes. One woman is described more than interviewed; however, had she not been a member of a sect of interest, she might not have been included at all. The gender issue is the most obvious example of the disconnect in Islamic culture. Naipaul misses or skips over all the chivalric language of his interviewees. They talk of Islam protecting women. They debate whether women should do this or that. Naipaul is not shy in calling them on their western disconnect, but gives them a pass here. Whether or not the interviewees themselves oppress women, their disconnect here, is every bit as important, if not more important than the issues Naipaul emphasizes in this book.

Sambasivan: There are two ways of writing about a country's history. One is to give a societal view at an aggregate level where chronological events give an overview of the country; the

other is to narrate the history seen through the eyes of the people living in that country. The latter approach requires painstaking travel, meticulous observation, objective listening and faithful translation of the message from the countrymen. Naipaul has done a superlative job of this visiting the Islamic states of Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia in the seventies. The contemporary issues of revolution, religious fundamentalism, political anarchies and economic backwardness of these countries are vividly described along with the context of why they are where they are. Thoroughly enjoyable.

Ilya: In 1979 Vidya Naipaul, the future Sir Vidya, a Trinidadian writer of Indian descent, went to revolutionary Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. He met a great many Muslims, from a high-ranking Iranian ayatollah to an Indonesian who described himself "a statistical Muslim", and who was worried that when his daughter married a pious young man from poor background and became a "born-again Muslim", she lost her personality and sense of humor. He also met several non-Muslims living in Muslim countries, such as a young Iranian communist who believed that the only country that had known true freedom was Russia between 1917 and 1953, his revolutionary fervor matching the religious fervor of his Muslim compatriots. The way Naipaul perceives it, Islam as practiced by those he interviewed is a reaction against modernity and the West. The West produces superior science and technology, but Islam is better spiritually. The paradox of Islam, according to Naipaul, is that it is not self-sufficient. Life in Muslim countries, including the propagation of the true faith, depends on technology imported from the spiritually deficient parts of the world. The same is true of all the other religions; my favorite example for Judaism is the niddah calculator. Before Indonesia became Muslim, it was Hindu and Buddhist, as the temple complexes at Prambanan and Borobudur show. An Indonesian Muslim told Naipaul that too much attention was being paid to the maintenance of these old places; the preservation of Indonesian cultural heritage should be something for the international community (i.e. the West) to look after. Naipaul contrasts Hinduism, with its epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana that give plenty of examples of moral ambiguity, with the moral certitude of the revealed religions Islam and Christianity. I am unpersuaded; the Indonesian who wanted to stop maintaining the old temple complexes reminded me of the BJP politician Gita Mehta wrote about who wanted to pull down the Taj Mahal.

Sujeet: i've got constantly believed that, if one desires to learn, one may still travel. reason regardless of what number books you examine a place, regardless of what percentage documentaries/movies you notice approximately its culture, historical past and people, irrespective of what number tales you hear, not anything offers extra realizing that the event you achieve in case you stopover at that place. I have not been everywhere, however it is on my list.~Susan Sontag How I want i may cross everywhere. yet alas, we will not pass everywhere, can we? and that is why we learn books, we watch documentaries/movies, we consult with people. One reads travelogues for 2 purposes - to achieve perception of a spot he hasn't ever been and to relive the thoughts of he had visited. during this travelogue, Naipul recounts his stopover at to 4 international locations - Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia - the lands of the believers in Islaam, within the overdue seventies/early eighties. Like his most famed travelogue - India, 1000000 mutinies now - during this booklet additionally Naipul attempts to discover the country's culture, tradition, life, rules throughout the quite a few encounters with the locals and leaders. I approached this publication with a lot expectancies to benefit in regards to the international locations i haven't visited and the opposite i've got had the chance to have

enterprise go back and forth to. Unfortunately, this e-book did not stay upto that expectations. Naipul's writings got here to me as no longer explorative, yet like from anyone who has have already got received robust reviews approximately whatever after which attempts to comply these evaluations by way of the selective research. Did i am getting extra perception than sooner than approximately these countries? Yes. But, have I anticipated to profit more? Oh yes. How I desire to stopover at these nations , specially Pakistan and Iran , and discover it myself!

Mayank Singh: something that V.S.Naipaul writes is eminently readable and there are few modern writers who can fit his erudition or skills. 'Among the Believers' is predicated at the author's travels via Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia from August 1979 to February 1980, within the seek of Islam and its effect on people. Written at a time of tumult - Iran within the wake of the revolution and grab of the USA Embassy; Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's overthrow and assassination in Pakistan; the strident ascendancy of United Malays nationwide supplier and hostile emotions in the direction of chinese language expatriates in Malaysia and the shadow of the 1965 communist purge and Suharto's regime in Indonesia - the booklet attempts to attract contextual relevance of current occasions via an Islamic prism. whereas the sweep of the e-book and its ambition is noteworthy, 'Among the Believers' fails to tie within the unfastened ends with any insightful analysis. The booklet meanders from nation to nation with out providing something meaningful. Naipaul can be to blame of supplying a biased and prejudicial view of those international locations together with his condescension from time to time bordering on insult. learn it for its timelessness and Naipaul's writing, with out waiting for something too profound.

Dirk Bufen: V. S. Naipaul beschreibt in diesem Reisebericht Begegnungen mit Muslimen, die er im Iran, Indonesien und Malaysia getroffen hat. Immer wieder tauchen dieselben reason auf: Die Sehnsucht der Interviewten nach Reinheit und Sauberkeit, der Ekel vor der westlichen nach materiellen Gütern strebenden Lebensweise, die etwa von der chinesischen Minorität Indonesiens besonders stark gelebt wird. Es entsteht der Eindruck, dass der starke Drang zum Islam in jenen Regionen auch eine paintings Flucht vor den Anforderungen der Moderne ist: Gewiss ja, die Chinesen im Nachbardorf sind bessere Kaufleute und bringen ihren Kindern mehr bei...aber das Mysterium Allahs bleibt ihnen verborgen und das Weiterleben nach dem Tode wird ihnen verweigert...Vergleichbare Einlassungen sind dem Buch immer wieder zu entnehmen und sorgen beim Leser für mitleidige Beklommenheit. V. S. Naipaul beschreibt den Islam und seine Anhänger in diesem Buch als Ideologen einer Gesellschaft, die Karl R. Popper als 'geschlossen' beschreiben würde. Es zählt nicht der gesunde Menschenverstand sondern nur der Wille Gottes, niedergelegt im Koran und all jene die sich nicht daran halten, haben zu büßen. Angesichts der schwierigen Integrationsbemühungen betreffs der islamischen Minderheiten hierzulande, bleibt die stille Hoffnung, dass dieses Werk, das zwar ein literarisches Ereignis ist, sich in seiner gesellschaftlichen Diagnose dauerhaft als Irrtum erweist.

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