CONCLUSION
CHAPTER - V
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Among non-western twentieth-century writers of English, Naipaul has gained a wide and varied readership. Few writers have been as prolific as he, in the genres of both fiction and non-fiction. He has emerged as a global personality "navigating civilisations and literary forms" (Bhat 52). He has managed to develop and sustain a singular and expressive literary style of his own. Naipaul's achievement lies "in the exemplary space his writings have helped create in the understanding, and making, of late twentieth-century literary history" (Mustafa 2). Naipaul's career evolved from the worldwide cultural changes that resulted in important writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Derek Walcott, Margaret Atwood, Ben Okri and Timothy Mo to name a few. Irving Howe declares Naipaul "the world's writer" (qtd. in Nixon 31) since he has mapped cultural spaces in his speculative journey around the globe. He is a global interpreter of human maladies and struggles of both the individuals and the societies to come to terms with their unsettled destinies. His voice is not a soothing but a searing one. His literary oeuvre comprises fiction, non-fiction and a uniquely characteristic fusion of narrative styles.

Naipaul's work charts his departure from the restricted background of Caribbean Island, "only a dot on the map of the world" (MP 45) to the liberated cosmopolitan culture of the larger world. Beginning with himself, Naipaul, from a small corner of the world, has broadened his horizons to acquire universal significance. His progress as a writer exhibits the various phases of the regional
Sharada Iyer has rightly pointed out: "His translation of the world he has inherited and the world he has lost is a text with no parallel in fiction" (238). A significant recognition of the worldview projected in his writings is the 1983 Jerusalem Prize awarded to Naipaul for "The Freedom of the Individual in Society." It is a tribute to "his noble vision of man's struggle for freedom and liberty" (qtd. in Kamra 8).

Naipaul hailed from the Asian Indian minority in black-dominated Trinidad, so his perspective on decolonization, imperialism, black-white relations and cultural alienation is pronounced and sharp. "He regards himself as a former colonial who has become a homeless cosmopolitan" (King, Naipaul 2). The West Indian situation is highly complex, presenting a juxtaposition of communities brought together by historical accident that had no shared tradition in terms of history, culture, religion or language. The West Indians suffered terrible geographical and socio-cultural alienation. The Caribbean islands were deprived of the indigenous culture that was part of the inner landscape of post-colonial countries like Africa and Asia. The West Indian writers lacked a tradition of continuity and a sense of wholeness of existence; they were disinherited from all traditions, yet they were exposed to various traditions. The concept of becoming a writer was in itself an assertion of independence and identity. In 1962 Naipaul declared, in The Middle Passage, "Living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than most, needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands" (73). This exhibits the West Indian writers' vulnerable situation to hold onto something concrete. The writers strove to heal this great rupture through their fiction.
Naipaul's assessment of his position as a writer is lucid. He was aware that he was using a literary form and a language, English, forged by one kind of society, to depict a completely different society, the Caribbean. He started writing in London about the East Indian minority in the Caribbean. The West Indies lacked a common tradition, as it was a hybrid society made up of Negroes, Whites and Asians. Naipaul realized that he had to seek his own literary tradition. Naipaul’s remark, made in a revealing essay, Jasmine in *The Overcrowded Barracoon and Other Articles* makes clear his initial struggle: “Every writer is, in the long run, on his own; but it helps, in the most practical way, to have a tradition. The English language was mine; the tradition was not” (27).

Naipaul holds a unique pride of place as a West Indian writer: he is a product of triple alienation. He is an Indian uprooted from the land of his ancestors. Second, he is a West Indian by birth and upbringing. Finally, he has taken up residence in London due to his self-chosen exile. These factors are largely responsible for the shaping of Naipaul’s personality and his evolution as a writer. Naipaul has become a voice of the modern expatriate of our time in feeling unattached, unillusioned and without purpose. He is an observer of the world’s follies, especially those problems that have cropped up as a result of the end of empire and the withdrawal of European rule from the Third World.

Isolated due to displacement and by temperament from allegiance to any country, community or creed, Naipaul examines the world with an open eye. Displacement from India and Trinidad are the two predominant forces operating behind his vision. For him, exile is a recurring, reinforcing division between self and
others that separates him from his Hindu Indian community in Trinidad, from other
Trinidadians, from Indians in India, and from the peoples in the developing
countries, to which he travels and lives as an observer. William Walsh observes that
in Naipaul “the mixture [. . .] of creeds, cultures and continents, with his expatriate
career, his being able to practise an art in and of totally dissimilar worlds, all gives
him a peculiarly contemporary quality” (V.S. Naipaul 3).

Naipaul has explored with great sensitivity the predicament of the exile – the
pain of homelessness and loss of roots. Many literary giants of this century are
actual exiles. In the field of fiction there are Conrad, Joyce, Beckett, Solzhenitsyn
and Naipaul. In Writers in Exile: The Creative Use of Home in Modern Literature, Andrew Gurr observes of James Joyce, “He spent his life obsessively rebuilding his
home in his art” (15). In a similar vein, Naipaul tried to create an identity and
construct a home in the world of his books.

Exile is the spur as well as the subject of Naipaul’s works. His early work is
an attempt at defining his own situation and establishing his identity as a writer.
From his own position of total deracination, he turned his attention to other lost
individuals in the “half-made societies” (qtd. in Morris 11) of the world who were
groping for self-definition. These societies were crippled by the burden of a
borrowed culture, mimicry and parasitism, both cultural and intellectual. The
colonizer was only physically absent, he was strongly entrenched in the dreams and
aspirations of the people. In Naipaul’s works, his own personal desolation at having
nothing he could call his own – neither culture nor tradition – is reflected. He uses
abundant images of shipwreck, water hyacinth, uprooted and drifting trees to convey
his sense of alienation. In *The Mimic Men* Ralph Singh refers to his desolation in Isabella as shipwreck:

I found myself longing for the certainties of my life on the island of Isabella, certainties which I had once dismissed as shipwreck.

Shipwreck: [. . .]. With my island background, it was the word that always came to me (27).

Naipaul, as a writer of exile, displays the Joycean and the Conradian pattern of response to exile. He began his literary career with his insistent return to his home territory in his early works. The first four novels (*The Mystic Masseur*, *The Suffrage of Elvira*, *Miguel Street* and *A House for Mr Biswas*) are a meticulous reconstruction of Naipaul’s childhood, background and birthplace. In his later works, he moves on to a Conradian meditation on societies where people lead half-lives doomed to remain so. In *Half a Life* Willie Chandran’s father leads a half-life after marrying a girl from the lower class and fleeing to the temple as a mendicant with a vow of silence. Willie Chandran moves from India to London and then to Africa, yet he remains searching for the meaning of life. Naipaul also questions the meaning of history and civilization. Like Conrad, Naipaul has emerged as “one of the great moralists of exile” (Pritchett 43). The writings of Naipaul draw upon an experience totally based on layered levels of alienation and exile. As a result, his works have become paradigmatic of the whole genre and a major current in twentieth-century life, thought and art. His vision of changes in civilizations, ushered in by historical upheavals, is both wide in its spectrum and deep in its dimensions. He covers the Caribbean islands, Africa, India, the Middle East and
England. He is a global persona who writes novels, which are of the present, for the present, and also for all time.

Naipaul is a person living on the periphery, on the margins, by inheritance and choice. In his interview with Ian Hamilton ("Without A Place") Naipaul remarks:

I couldn’t have become a writer without London: the whole physical apparatus enables a man to make a living. London is my metropolitan centre; it is my commercial centre; and yet I know that it is a kind of limbo and that I am a refugee in the sense that I am always peripheral (41).

As a child he was shuffled from house to house, staying with his mother’s extended family and with his father for brief periods. As the son of an iconoclastic journalist, he is a bundle of contradictions. He is an East Indian in a primarily black West Indian society, a colonial in the English metropolis, an East Indian who is a West Indian out of place in the motherland of India, a writer from a developing country living in a developed country, and writing about peoples in developing countries, and a non-believer among believers. He emerges as a writer from a distant former British colony who by his talent and sheer dint of determination made a place in literature. Naipaul shares the same predicament of his character Ralph Singh in The Mimic Men. Exiled in London, Singh lives in a cheerless, drab hotel room in a nondescript suburb while he attempts to discover what is true or essential in his life through the act of writing about it. As in the case of Singh, for Naipaul home could
never ultimately be more than the books he wrote or the action of writing them. Naipaul exhibits that a writer surely dwells in the characters of his works.

The early novels of Naipaul are in a light vein, interspersed with comedy and have a distinct flavour. Naipaul himself has termed his early works as works of apprenticeship and has expressed his disapproval of the tone of unevenness. His strength lies in his ability to create unlimited incidents and memorable characters like Biswas, Mrs Tulsi, Beharry, Hat, B. Wordsworth and Harbans. The influence of Dickens is seen in these novels, which are filled with satire and irony. The dinner party in *The Mystic Masseur* is filled with satire. The party is hosted by the governor for the newly elected members of the Legislative Council. Ganesh is hesitant about the ethics of table manners and the use of cutlery, in particular. Naipaul succeeds in exposing the behaviour of the colonial trying to ape the manners of the white rulers. Naipaul is a casual satirist in these novels mocking at the foibles of human beings. There is social criticism, compassion and rare candour. Premanand Kumar in *The Glory and the Good* rightly observes: “Humour and humanity, irony and even satire, the mingling of realism and fantasy, the adroit manipulation of the serious and absurd and the capacity of uncanny observation are among the marks of these novels” (267).

The first four novels (from *The Mystic Masseur* to *A House For Mr Biswas*) constitute a Trinidad tetralogy, a Joycean compulsive return to the scenes of childhood and early youth. They are simple and direct and the life depicted in them is authentic and intimate. These novels, though imbued with comic exuberance, have hints of the dark vision of the later works. R. H. Lee observes “Naipaul’s work
shows a line of development something like that from *Pickwick Papers* to *Hard Times*" (69). The progressively darkening vision culminates in the bleak, nightmarish account of events in an African town in *A Bend in the River*. In this novel everyone is homeless. Indar, an Indian in Africa, rejects the dream of home and security as anachronistic and isolating, but in the end, he is unable to resist the dream of stability and yearns for home.

The later novels have no positive human relationship – friendship, filial love, marital love and compassion. Naipaul’s characters reflect the negative effects of living in a spiritually and emotionally sterile environment. His books are peopled by uprooted, drifting, mimic men – derelicts, ruins and failures like Jimmy Ahmed in *Guerrillas* and Willie Chandran in *Half a Life*. Sexual relationships are either exploitative or meaningless, like the affair between Yvette, wife of the President, and Salim in *A Bend in the River*. The emotional aridity of his fiction reflects the reality of the lives of his homeless and isolated individuals. Naipaul’s fiction is bereft of the resilience of the human spirit, its capacity for hope, joy and zest for life.

Naipaul’s fiction deals with the futility of endeavour, the sense of void and the absurdity of man’s situation in a hostile world. Irving Howe observes that Naipaul’s “deracination [. . .] enables a steely perspective, the scraped honesty of the margin. It spurs him to a cool precision, trusting his own eyes” (qtd. in Nixon 31). His lonely, lost and drifting characters – Jimmy Ahmed, Ralph Singh, Salim and Willie Chandran – are devoid of positive relationships. They reflect Naipaul’s belief that man is essentially alone and must find his way in a world without meaning.
'Naipaul’s women characters are insignificant and do not play a prominent role. Leela in The Mystic Masseur and Shama in A House For Mr Biswas are pliable and play a subdued part beside their husbands. But Shama is the more volatile of the two and plays truant by escaping to her mother’s house after quarrels with Biswas. Laura in Miguel Street evokes pathos by her incomprehensible love for her eight illegitimate children. The women characters who generate a kind of horror of their sexuality are Linda, Jane, Sandra and Yvette (who is beaten, humiliated and degraded by her lover). Ana, in Half a Life, evinces strength and authority and is a source of support to Chandran. Using her as a prop, he puts an end to his writing career and follows her to Africa: “She had given me my African life; she was my protector; I had no other anchor” (HL 180).

Naipaul has experimented with several new techniques, especially in the blending of genres in a new style of his own. Even before the mix of genres became a trend, Naipaul created genre fusion: “He has been praised for his creative use of autobiography in his travel narratives and for converting autobiographical material into poignant fiction [. . .]” (Feder 1). He resorted to the blurring of generic boundaries, and there is a constant experimentation in them. In Finding the Centre, the first part is autobiography, whereas the second part reads like an essay. The Mimic Men is a novel that turns autobiographical, the past and the present interlock, conveying the idea that the past is part of the present. The past, by being written about in the present, attains significance in the future. The Enigma of Arrival though a novel, begins as an essay, with Naipaul’s stay in Wiltshire. It turns autobiographical, as it moves back in time, to his departure from Trinidad and his
first arrival in London. Sections one, three and four are in the same time frame and describe the English countryside and his experiences in Wiltshire. Sections two and five are a reordering of his past. This novel has been particularly selected for praise by the Nobel foundation, for the felicity of his language and his description of the English countryside. Naipaul's prose style led Derek Walcott to make this comment on The Enigma of Arrival: "There isn't a better English around, and for me this is wonderful without bewilderment, since our finest writer of the English sentence by praising the beauty of England, however threatened with industrial encroachment preserves it from itself" (qtd. in Thieme, "Naipaul's Nobel" 6).

The blurring of the borderlines of fiction and essay is the hallmark of Naipaul's style of writing. In an interview with Ronald Bryden on 22 March 1973, Naipaul observes: "considering the nature of the society I came from, considering the nature of the world I have stepped into and the world I have to look at, I could not be a professional novelist in the old sense [...]" (qtd. in Ray v). Naipaul's literary career exhibits conscious experimentation with literary forms to evolve a distinct style of his own. To explore the changing reality ushered in by sweeping historical changes and civilizational transformations, the literary forms need to be modified and moulded. Naipaul observes that a writer's "Knowledge of the world changes, and the forms have to change to meet the demands of the material [...] We cannot be burdened by dead forms" (qtd. in Bhat 66). Naipaul believes that all forms of writing – fiction, academic work, history and travel book should be rethought, reconsidered and revised. Experimentation with literary forms is a significant way of handling human experience, and the challenges faced in
communication should be adequately met with. Naipaul relates a changing society to changing literary forms, when he observes in *The Return of Eva Peron*: "The great societies that produced the great novels of the past have cracked. Writing has become more private and more privately glamorous" (218). Many of Naipaul’s novels are outside the limits of a traditional work of fiction, like *Finding the Centre* and *The Enigma of Arrival*.

Writing for Naipaul is an ordering of experience. He observes in his illuminating essay “Jasmine” in *The Overcrowded Barracoon and Other Articles*, “I sought continuously to relate literature to life” (28). It is a means of coming to terms with reality. In *V.S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction*, Landeg White rightly observes: “Naipaul’s is a shaping rather than an inventive imagination” (24). Fact is shaped into fiction and fiction itself is an understanding of the factual world. Literature and life interpenetrate; fiction and non-fiction complement and counterpoint each other. *Finding the Centre* and *The Enigma of Arrival* are a blend of autobiography and descriptive essay. Some novels are historical, some personal and some traditional. *A Bend in the River* is the history of Africa after independence when the country was ruled by a mysterious dictator who retained the reins of power through a shrewd manipulation of rhetoric, fraud and show of force. *A House For Mr Biswas* is both personal and traditional, following the norms of a novel. *The Enigma of Arrival* is both personal and non-traditional as a novel. Naipaul has proved, through his works, the definition by Evelyn Waugh that literature is a record of human experiences that are totally transformed. Robert D. Hamner in *Critical Perspectives on V.S. Naipaul* has paid rich encomiums while reflecting on his art:
By putting his finger on elusive problems, foibles, follies, and vices, re-creating them within recognizable characters, he gives immediacy and comprehensible form to a reality which is otherwise too complex and expansive to grasp. This is no small achievement (xxx).

Naipaul insists that the function of a novelist goes beyond documentary realism. He should impose his vision on the world, not merely record what he sees. He considers the novel as a medium of social inquiry, and views the writer as one who owes a responsibility to society and his work is of great relevance in a world where the diaspora suffer from emotional instability. His ruthless adherence to his dark vision and refusal to be an optimist provides a persuasive power to his depressing fictional world. Alfred Kazin observes that Naipaul is different from other novelists of contemporary exodus because he reflects the tenuousness of man’s hold on the earth. A disillusioned perception of life generates the courage to face things, as they exist, with all their sordidness. Naipaul voices the desperation of man when Salim remarks in the opening line of A Bend in the River: “The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it” (BR 1).

Naipaul has excelled as a writer of non-fiction. His first non-fictional assignment led to the publication of The Middle Passage. The proposal to write a book about the Caribbean islands came from the premier, Eric Williams, when Naipaul was in Trinidad in 1960 on a three-month government scholarship. Naipaul travelled to India and recorded his experiences in An Area of Darkness. Naipaul discovered in non-fiction a mode of expression complementary to the vision of the
novels. He could express well his ideas about the world through non-fiction, which became his mode of examining the societies of the Third World. He felt that his response to the world could be expressed adequately and imaginatively in journalism and non-fiction. In his interview with Ronald Bryden in 1973, Naipaul observes “I take my journalism extremely seriously because I think it’s a very fair response to my world. It’s very personal and very particular. It’s something that can’t be converted into fiction” (367). Naipaul felt that the disordered world about which he was writing could be tellingly portrayed through non-fiction, rather than by adopting the conventional form of the novel. He has used this literary genre to perfection and converted literature into an equipment for leading sound lives.

Naipaul has the probing, rational intellect of a skillful observer, interviewer and recorder of the inner lives of others as expressed in their words, their appearance and their least gestures. In “Conrad’s Darkness” Naipaul remarks that style in writing is not a mere “arrangement of words” but an “orchestration of perceptions” (qtd. in Hamner, xxiii). His respect for reality, his command of a crisp, clear, descriptive style, his sharp eye for the telling detail – these are the hallmarks of his non-fiction and travelogues. His works belong to the highest tradition of the best kind of journalism. The events are described meticulously, his eye recording all possible details. The scene of action comes alive. The blend of the characters’ finely recorded impressions, and his discovery of echoes within himself of what he records – all these contribute to making Naipaul a writer of non-fiction par excellence, Paul Theroux observes in V.S. Naipaul that he possesses:
an unswerving literary and moral integrity; his eye, attentive for the smallest detail, can give an apparently common landscape or unremarkable physique many features. These are the qualities of a great writer, for whom a book might be a two-or three-year proposition, as a number of Naipaul’s books have been (454).

Naipaul’s literary career is in symmetrical conformity with his childhood desire for a “romantic career [. . .] as a writer” (qtd. in Mustafa 8). Naipaul has revealed in Reading and Writing that he was long obsessed with the “FANTASY of being a writer” (27). This idea was firmly ingrained in him by his journalist father. Naipaul began a process of self-generation of himself as writer. The decision to be a writer involved long labour with all the accompanying penalties of solitude. Naipaul feels a writer’s work involves:

long periods of total isolation [. . .]. It’s a rather horrible life [. . .] you become crankish – I used to wonder why all the writers I got to know were all crankish. I understand more and more; it’s the sheer solitude and loneliness of the job! (qtd. in Theroux, Naipaul 454).

Naipaul has never been anything but a writer, “that noble thing” (FC 40). He prides himself on the fact that he has not chosen any other profession. He drew on his stock of primary experience for the writing of his first four novels. He was afraid of being devoid of writing material. The terrifying lack of literary subjects gripped him. He suffered from artistic sterility. He travelled to distant places in search of subjects and wrote non-fiction. He has made himself the subject of his works.
Naipaul’s soul-searching is so prevalent that it becomes the guiding principle of his critical technique. Naipaul’s reminiscences of his early life in Trinidad and his efforts to make himself a writer in London are revealed in *Finding the Centre* and *The Enigma of Arrival*. Gradually book after book he eased himself into knowledge and there was no looking back.

Naipaul is endearingly preoccupied with the art of writing and has great respect for the calling of a writer. His reflections about a writer are explicitly brought out in “The Writer” in *Critical Perspectives on V.S. Naipaul* in which he observes:

> The writer, inspite of all that has been said about society’s indifference to him, is a glamour-figure. As prophet, as journal-keeper or letter-writer, as traveller and observer, deviser of tales or magician with words, he has always been felt to be above society; he is the last free man. The exploitation of this glamour through the figure of the writer-narrator, however tough, however cynical, is a device of romance (Hamner 30).

In *The Enigma of Arrival* Naipaul observes that writing is the focal point of his life: “With me, everything started from writing. Writing had brought me to England, had sent me away from England; had given me a vision of romance; had nearly broken me with disappointment” (154). Naipaul has dwelt at length on the writing process in his novels, articles and interviews. He is enamoured of the role of a literary artist, and has made the writer, a recurring theme in his novels. The writer
motif is significant in the novels of Naipaul. Few writers have written so comprehensively about the art of writing as Naipaul. There is: “a special anguish attached to the career: whatever the labour of any piece of writing, whatever its creative challenges and satisfactions” (EA 94) – making a beginning as a writer, the selection of subject matter, difficulty in publishing, and the response from the readers. The sense of achievement in writing nullifies the shortcomings in its strenuous path.

Many of Naipaul’s protagonists love to write and carve a niche for themselves through writing. Naipaul has transferred his love for writing to his characters. Right from the first novel, The Mystic Masseur, to the last, Half a Life, Naipaul’s protagonists have a passion for writing and nurture the ambition to become a writer. Writing helps them achieve identity, social status in the eyes of the world and infuses meaning into their inane lives. Ganesh in The Mystic Masseur, Biswas in A House for Mr Biswas and Ralph Singh in The Mimic Men strive to write and become success stories. Willie Chandran in Half a Life fails to emerge successful because he is devoid of steadfast will and unflinching faith in his writing ability. Naipaul traces the early stages of his writing process in Finding the Centre and The Enigma of Arrival to prove that single-minded devotion to meet the creative challenges of writing alone can bring literary success.

Ganesh in, The Mystic Masseur, is a voracious reader of books. He loves to read and accumulates books in large numbers. He is an avid reader, like his creator Naipaul who observes in The Enigma of Arrival: “I loved books, I was a reader – it was my reputation at home” (109). Reading the books written by others induces in
Ganesh, the resolution to become a writer himself. He sticks to his firm determination and successfully overcomes all hurdles to the writing process. He achieves his target, and his two books, *What God Told Me* and *Profitable Evacuation*, enhance his popularity throughout Trinidad. His reputation helps him ascend greater heights in politics, paving the way for his emergence as Member of the British Empire. *The Mystic Masseur* focuses on an individual’s rise to fame and fortune through writing. Ganesh’s fiery ambition to be a writer coupled with strong will-power helps Ganesh attain success.

The protagonist in *A House for Mr Biswas* is modelled on Naipaul’s father, Seepersad, who was a lover of books and enjoyed reading. Right from the beginning, Biswas emerges as a comic figure worthy of derision. It is through writing that Biswas’ life experiences an upswing. The novel is an unremarkable man’s search for significance through the art of writing. Biswas stumbles into the office of the *Sentinel* looking for a job. His role as a journalist enables him to break all shackles of his dependence on his wife’s family. He gains popularity and gets due recognition in his social circle. His life secures anchorage through writing. Mr. Burnett, a lover of sensational writing encourages flights of imagination. This proves an impetus to Biswas who plunges into the craft of writing with zeal and gusto. He excels as a master reporter. His roaring success subdues the pride and high-handedness of the Tulsi family into adoration of his craft. The golden period of Biswas’ life is his term on the *Sentinel* under Mr Burnett. He does not die “unnecessary and unaccommodated” (HB 14) without laying claim to his identity as an individual. His death is recorded for millions to read. His unsuccessful life
assumes significance through the power of writing. *A House for Mr Biswas* extols the art of writing, which has the power to transform mundane lives into meaningful ones. The novel is a father’s dream of becoming a professional writer told through his son’s realization of that dream.

Ralph Singh, in *The Mimic Men*, records and recharges his chequered world through the mode of writing. Singh settles down in a suburban hotel in London to write his memoir. His account is self-censure, or therapeutic autobiography, that proves to be an indictment of the mimic men of the new world. The protagonist’s exploration through his own personal distress throws light on the grim realities of the post-colonial world. Writing about the events of his past, has a soothing effect on him. The act of “composedly writing” (TMM 8) becomes his choice obsession and his absorbing preoccupation. Singh recreates his life through the “writing-up of experience” (TMM 26). The rendering of his life in black and white proves fruitful. It opens a new chapter of his life infusing meaning to his past, present and future. His narrative does not have a chronological order. There is a bunching of images and moods. The past and the present criss-cross to evolve meaningful patterns of his existence. Singh feels that “The writing of this book has been more than a release [. . . ]” (TMM 189) from the pain of shipwreck and the sense of desolation. In this novel, Naipaul exhibits his reverence for the vocation of a writer. Through the persona of Singh, Naipaul proves that writing is a balm to frustrated and alienated souls.

In *Finding the Centre* Naipaul probes his writing life to establish his literary beginnings. His initial hardships in writing are focused upon. The choice of subject
matter proves mind-boggling to him. He finally resolves to write about the world he knew as a child. His Trinidadian experience proves to be a pivot for imagination to work on, and he completes *Miguel Street*. Through his personal life, Naipaul highlights the ordeals of getting started as a writer. The vague wish of an aspiring writer can bear fruit only by unstinted devotion to the craft of writing.

*The Enigma of Arrival*, a sequel to *Finding the Centre*, is an insight into Naipaul’s writing discoveries and his emergence as a writer of promise. His love for metropolitan material and its rejection, his reliance on his island memories, success as a writer, and the triumphant visit to Trinidad, are traced. He portrays the ordeals and hardships of a struggling writer. His firm determination and implicit faith in his vocation of writing brought him success. Naipaul has repeatedly stressed the fact that the life of an aspiring writer is full of doubts and misgivings. One should overcome these hurdles to attain success.

Willie Chandran, in *Half a Life*, lacks the steadfast will to become a writer. He lacks determination and loses confidence in his writing ability. The bohemian world of London distracts him, and he fails to pursue his literary career with undiluted devotion. Chandran’s book of stories is his first and his last publication as well. Unable to pursue his goal of writing, he turns his back on his literary career.

Naipaul’s last novel strengthens the recurring idea that unswerving will and unstinted devotion to the craft of writing alone can bring laurels. Naipaul has the same message for young budding writers as Ruskin Bond: “Make sure you can write first. Don’t give up easily, be persistent” (qtd. in Salam). Perseverance in an aspiring
writer is of utmost significance for literary success. There is awareness, in his work, that a man of letters is a great and noble man who is a master of his destiny. Through his writing, Naipaul counsels aspiring writers that whatever be the distractions and hardships on the literary path, one has to overcome them with a determined will. The sense of achievement in writing undermines and overpowers the hardships in its arduous literary path.