PREFACE

V.S. Naipaul, one of the greatest Caribbean Writers in English, has been a great novelist and travel-writer. V.S. Naipaul, a great Trinidadian writer of Indian descent, wrote many splendid and excellent novels apart from collections of essays. As a novelist, he is an international figure and exceptional in that matter. He is acclaimed to be a prolific and voluminous writer who enjoys enormous credibility. There is no other writer in the Third World who can excel him in quality and quantity. This Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipaul happens to be one of the most admired contemporary novelists today.

His novels are concerned with individual’s quest for identity in a changing milieu. In most of his novels he not only chronicles life but also analyses and clarifies the realities confronting human beings. The collision of cultures and the resultant ambiguities in human adjustment, the colonial situation producing a special kind of human psychosis, and the motives within the individual creating a structure of human relationships unique to the colonial or post-colonial society are the prominent themes in his novels. He deals with how an individual resists or overcomes the conditions in which he is placed, and ultimately succeeds or, fails to survive and succeeds. Thus, his fiction acquires historical, social and psychological significance and he becomes a chronicler, historian and biographer.

Naipaul’s novels are essentially about the twentieth century phase of Trinidad and Tobago. Historical forces were making a headway and the past history of colonialism recedes and shows New History dawning on the horizon. It is the progress of a new History, which the writer of the New World projects. An important stage in the post colonial world of Trinidad was the arrival of the American soldiers and experts and new colonial bureaucrats at the time of World War II. In the post-war period, tourists poured in and Trinidad prepared itself for hosting them. A new phase of history commences for the islands which witness, not total freedom but a new brand of colonialism.
Naipaul portrays the fate of the Indian diaspora in West Indies and Africa which face insecurity. Some of his novels are post-modern epics of Africa and the situation there is no better than the situation in the West Indies. Naipaul has a global persona and he views and evaluates the post-colonial scenario in all the Third World countries. His novels about the West Indies are more vivid and full of life.

V.S. Naipaul’s vision of changes in civilization ushered in by historical upheavals is both wide in its spectrum and deep in its dimension. He covers the Caribbean islands, Africa, India, the Middle East and England. He is a Global persona, who wrote novels which are of our time and also for all time. A creation of the diaspora, he experimented with several new techniques, especially in the blending of genres in a new style. Naipaul, fully voiced the present-day scenario, such as pluralism, the existential nihilism and the nature of the abused in life. He gives vivid portrayal of post-colonial Third World countries passing from a stage of colonial Feudalism to twentieth century Capitalism. He is truly a twentieth century novelist capturing the epochal phenomenon of a post-colonial Third World. Above all, his novels are the saga of an expatriate coming to terms with reality.

This thesis attempts to articulate the predicament of colonial modernity. His concern is mainly with how actual men and women respond and react to their colonial environment and how in doing so they project in sense, themselves. He acts as a sensitive ironist who distances reality from facts, and character from action in presenting his characters as individuals.

The present thesis entitled COLONIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN SELECT NOVELS OF V.S. NAIPUAL deals with colonial and post-colonial issues in the select novels of Naipaul. They are The Mystic Masseur, A House for Mr. Biswas, The Mimic Man, A Bend in the River and Half a Life.

The present thesis is divided into Seven Chapters. The Introductory Chapter, Post-Colonial Societies and the Process of De-Colonization is a brief
acquaintance with Naipaul's biographical details, making of the novelist, his
works, both fiction and non-fiction and also his contribution as a Commonwealth
writer have been taken up. Apart from it the origin of the colonialism, its effect
on modern man, origin of Commonwealth literature are discussed.

The Second Chapter captioned, The Mystic Masseur: A Socio-Cultural
Exposition establishes the theme of the displacement of individuals in colonial
and post-colonial contexts and the struggle of the writer to create a sense of
order from chaotic social situation. The Mystic Masseur is the story of Ganesh,
a failed school teacher turned mystic. The story illustrates Naipaul's stance on
mimicry as a theme. The names of the characters have also allegorical
significance. Ganesh is associated with success and prosperity. In this novel
Ganesh raises mimicry to the plane of an art form and establishes a new
category of the mimic as an artist.

The Third Chapter, A House for Mr. Biswas: An Epic Novel, is the longest
and the best novel Naipaul has written. It tells the story of a Trinidad born
Indian Mohun Biswas from birth to death. The novel traces the tale of Biswas'
struggle to make something valuable out of a circumscribed and mediocre
existence. It is a struggle symbolized by the hero's efforts to own his own house,
which in a way is to own his own life. Out of this simple plot, Naipaul creates
an epic novel, densely populated, rich in variety and felt life, full of humour,
bubbling with vitality, and in the end powerfully tragic.

The Fourth Chapter enjoins, The Mimic Men: Quest for Order from Crisis
and Chaos. In subject and technique The Mimic Men marks a break from
Naipaul's earlier novels. The critics are in full agreement that the novel does
not hold much hope for the colonial victims. The novel has a tone of levity even
though it deals with a very grim problem faced by people living in a colonial
country. Structurally the novel marks a new break from his earlier novels. The
chief aspect in the present novel is that the narrator frequently resorts to flash-
back technique and bunching of images and moods. Naipaul faces a well-known
problem of using 'a point of view' method. Ralph Singh is very much the
author's persona and his views are at once confessional and objective. At one level Ralph Singh's account amounts to self-censure or a kind of therapeutic autobiography, while at another level it is a scathing indictment of The Mimic Men of the new world.

The Fifth Chapter, A Bend in the River: A Treatise on the Dilemma of Identity Crisis is also a critical scrutiny of the lives lived by natives colonized by European masters. The raw material for this novel is the authentic background of the turbulent Zaire where Naipaul visited in 1965. A Bend in the River is Naipaul's attempt to write a contemporary political novel where history means just drifting and shattering of edifices without any attempt to recreate or reconstruct. The novel is set in Africa, a cursed country because it has just emerged out of tribal past and colonial rule, but is not able to avail itself of the so-called blessings and advantages of modernity.

The Sixth Chapter is entitled, Half a Life: An Inter-Continental Post-Colonial Dilemma. Half a Life, Naipaul's latest novel, goes back to his favorite theme: the dilemma of an immigrant. The story of Willie Somerset Chandran involves two sets of father-son stories in the tale of three generations of an immigrant Indian Brahmin family. Fact and fiction, biographical materials and historical facts are all mixed up in creating a wonderful fictive world. The book has been rightly described as 'a devastating work of exceptional sensibility grace and humour'.

The Seventh and Final Chapter, Quest to Establish a New Consciousness, is about the distinction and greatness of V.S. Naipaul as a writer and his influential contribution to the world of English Literature in a global way. It also sums up the other six chapters. On a whole V.S. Naipaul enjoys a weird reputation as a person despite all the accolades he has received and continues getting as a writer.