Chapter - I
Introduction
Post-Colonial Societies and the Process of De-Colonisation
The twentieth century has witnessed remarkable changes in practically all literary genres. From the imagist and symbolist poetry to the stream-of-consciousness novel, among others, the transformation in terms of milieu and the modern ethos has been completed. However, these phenomenal developments were limited essentially to the western world. Literature in this context has rarely reflected colossal human problems like poverty, hunger, political and social exploitation in a large way. One could perhaps mention writers like Dickens or Hardy in the nineteenth century context, but they are largely localized to an English socio-economic framework and setting. It is difficult to discern through them a large humanist concern for great collective problems of mankind outside the White world, which appeared homogeneous and self-contained. Although it is possible to extend the meaning by keeping in mind the broad themes, literature in the English and American context has been largely concerned with the motifs and metaphors of existence, quest and survival in the western world.

What seems to have shaped the course of literature in the later half of the twentieth century are several new changes of a progressive nature in the socio-political and socio-economic contexts. These changes were directly related to the rise of colonialism in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Africa, Asia and the South American continents which accounted for the dehumanized state of man in the system of slavery. The western world, with its cultural and geographical insularity presided over the destinies of millions of men, uprooted and sold, who worked like animals for their sheer physical and economic survival. "The ultimate 'disintegration of imperialism, the rise of militant ideologies, the eclipse of religion and social conventions as a force in life, the incredible spread of science and technology, and the vast network of the communication media have effected a whole new set of visions, values and perspectives, through which existence could be seen much more sensitively." In the new
independent post-colonial atmosphere, this has also created new divisions, of the Black and the White, the rich and the poor, the developed and the underdeveloped of the First and the Third World. This awareness has also created new metaphors and meanings in culture, language, literature and the overall human consciousness.

The Black movement in literature in Africa and the rest of the Third World is a part of this new awareness towards discovering one's identity and native roots. This has naturally resulted in reorienting the consciousness of the western man today. The recognition of the ex-colonial part of the world having a rich human experience is itself a lasting proof of the changed situation. In the nineteenth century, men like Anthony Trollope and James Anthony Froude could write of the decadent aspects of the colonies and their lack of awareness, which was an imperialist-political view, as is widely recognized now. There has been in the Marxian sense, a qualitative leap which has upset the archetypal gestalts, to begin with, and created new aspects and attitudes in terms of mutual relations. All this could not but affect the complex relationship between the peoples of the Occident and the Orient, between the ex-colonial rulers and the emergent new nations of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

Literature is perhaps the only medium to vindicate and illuminate the collective consciousness and psyche of the people in universal and enduring patterns. That Colonialism and exploitation are interrelated has been recognized for a considerable time. The sociology of slavery constituted the extreme poverty and illiteracy of the Blacks on the one hand, and the vast power of the Whites on the other. The dependence of the colonized on their masters resulted in the slave's loss of vision, power and identity. Indeed, the greatest loss in the colonial system was of one's spiritual and emotional urges. Individualism was the first to disappear.
The colonial system ultimately acquired the shape of a Manichean world. The slave was not only delimited physically, but was also the quintessence of evil for the White settler. To quote Frantz Fanon on the character of colonial exploitation:

"Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonialist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better, never existed in the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values."

Together with this the western world, and what now has come to be termed the Third World, were tied in a strange, uncomfortable knot of relationships bred on hatred and mistrust. It formed the dubious link between the oppressor and the oppressed. The worst aspect of the colonial oppression was the sabotage of the subject people from within. It was a sort of psychological invasion from within to undermine faith in their own values and patterns of life. For the colonizer, the native traditions and myths were the very symbol of their poverty of spirit and moral depravity. They were caught in the fast political and economic strategy of the European powers. This ultimately resulted in the loss of their cultural, religious and physical identity, and the virtual surrender to the White value-system. With the gradual movement towards de-colonization in the first-half of the twentieth century, the situation became more complex. The colonial legacy left the former colonies in a state of moral and spiritual inertia. On the one hand, the newly-freed people looked desperately at their homeland, on the other, they had to make imaginative adjustments to exist in the New World with its own ecology and other necessities. In short, they had to reject the historical past in favour of the geographical present.

Commonwealth Literature is a Literature of ex-colonies, being the result of various types of migrations and cross-cultural accidents.
The very existence and the meanings of the ex-colonial literature are rooted in history and the colonial aftermath. With its multi-dimensional subject of study, Commonwealth literature includes the whole complex fate of man in time, space, history and ecology. It records the process that changed the life and status of the natives, and bought slaves under centuries of domination. It pin points the existential reality of inhabiting a multi-cultural, polycentric society, full of question marks.

What indeed constitutes the triumph of Commonwealth literature is its having enabled continents, cultures and traditions to come together, interact and move towards a new creative vitality. In the hands of White and non-White writers, it has emerged as a very powerful and promising response to human situation in a world of change, pulls and pressures. The writers and poets have portrayed a world which can no longer be denied or evaded. The old historico-political, socio-economic and geo-physical equations have now become obsolete, their place having been taken by new concepts of freedom, choice and human identity. With the collapse of old power structures, their place has been taken by a new logic of existence in a bi-cultural, multi-cultural or a pluralistic world. There is surely a kind of new cosmopolitan transcendentalism visible in the concerns of Commonwealth writers like V.S.Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Wilson Harris, Raja Rao, George Lamming, Patrick White, and Margaret Atwood to name only a few. It is, as William Walsh termed it, "a manifold voice" with one metaphor of experience and language.³

Though English has enriched its meaning, context and area of communication, it is only a historico-political identity, extending to other areas of co-operation. Commonwealth literature does not surrender to the centrality of the British literary tradition. At its best, the latter serves as a catalytic agent that has brought together the White and non-White world, free and subject peoples, colonial and non-colonial nations. At its back is the undeniable common
experience of geographical alienation, slavery, racial discrimination and forced migration which has accounted for the viability of its artistic and aesthetic approach. It has shown new trends in sensibility, new blends of structure and style while admitting failure and short comings. Never before have such historical experiences shaped the imagination of the writers; Commonwealth literature, thus, portrays the imponderables of human possibilities in a wide context.

Geographically, as is well-known, Commonwealth literature is divided into two hemispheres, one comprising the countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, the other comprising Canada and nations in the South Pacific represented by Australia and New Zealand. This is significant because the two groups have a different history of colonialism. This is not to deny common strands of experience in terms of culture, society and ecology. Together, they pose colossal problems of adjustments in a wide context, carving out authentic cultural and literacy patterns out of anonymity and wilderness has been a common issue. So has been the reality of existing in a hostile, broken and culturally fragmented environment. As is obvious, the politico-historical contexts of Australia, India, Nigeria and the West Indies to name a few, have been diverse. The newly-freed colonial peoples in African countries, India and the West Indies were urgently in search of an enduring pattern which would enable them to live authentically within the framework of new values and attitudes fostered by the European colonizers. Here and there, there were some throwbacks to the bush culture or the fundamentalist revival of certain religious communities, but on the whole, the effort was to seek accommodations and adjustments for their obviously restless state.

The urge in all Commonwealth writing has been to highlight the metaphysic of existence in a displaced, uprooted and dehumanized context thrust upon men by forces beyond their control. The increasing consciousness of geographical, racial and colour barriers in Commonwealth and Negro literature and situation of the slaves recalls
their physical, economic, cultural and sexual exploitation, not to speak of the immeasurable psychic damage at the hands of a ravaging capitalism. The ‘nigger’ or the slave from elsewhere was formally incorporated in Kipling’s White man’s burden. This was accompanied by the belief that the Whites were naturally superior to the Blacks. David Hume, the well known philosopher and historian wrote as early as 1753 in his essay, “I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor ever any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers among them, no arts, no sciences.”

One of the results of this type of racism was that even after slavery was formally abolished in 1834, there was little difference in the ingrained social thinking in British society. The basic attitudes were left unaltered. Consequently, the Negro’s or a Black’s attempt to make himself educated or civilized was looked at with contempt and mockery. This is one of the standard themes in Lamming and Naipaul, where either the protagonists migrate to London, or they fancifully follow the White values and manners. Spiritual, cultural and individual alienation and the feeling of being a deracinated recluse were the direct results, particularly in Africa and Caribbean. The plight of the indentured labourers from India to the Caribbean was no less acute. It was another facet of the economic exploitation under the colonial system, as pioneered by Hugh Tinker in his, A New system of slavery. The theme forms the major fictional impulse in Naipaul, and to a lesser extent, in Samuel Selvon and Edger Mittelholzer.

Writing about Commonwealth literature, Ravenscroft opined that it implied “a monolithic over simplification that is hardly justified by fact, that being written in English is only the superficial similarity shared by a number of national literatures in English, many of which, as in India and partly of Africa, are sub-divisions of multi-lingual
literatures"5 This view presents typical British thinking about Commonwealth literature. It must be emphasized that Commonwealth literature is now a reality which cannot be ignored. Despite tremendous diversity and divergence, this literature is characterized by a certain "colonial consciousness"6 and is the product of a well-known fact of history, that is English education, English literature, and English institutions, which caused an intellectual ferment in the Commonwealth countries enabling their writers to assert their national identity and to give befitting expressions to their distinct creative urges and aspirations. As Patrick White observes in Voss, common forms are continually breaking into brilliant shapes if we will explore them.

The "colonial consciousness" finds a powerful expression in the writings of V.S. Naipaul. There were writers before him who contributed to the range and variety of the West Indian literature, but very few of them enjoyed Naipaul's reputation outside the West Indies. His powerful mastery over the language and vision helped him add new dimensions to the "astonishing achievement"7 of the West Indian novel. An important feature of his fictional world is his delineation of the Indian immigrant's dilemma, his problems and plights, in the fast changing Caribbean world.

Paul Theroux, writing about V.S. Naipaul in 1972, pointed out "the novelist's uniqueness as well as oddness reflected in the lack of neatness in construction and elimination."8 Naipaul has changed his focus as a novelist to the travelogue writer. His profound interest in history, people and landscape led him to express the same with a different narrative technique. He says, "However creatively one travels, however deep an experience in childhood or middle age, it takes thought to understand what one has lived through or where one has been."9
Naipaul as an expatriate writer wrote his first book at the age of twenty-two in London. His first Bogart story made him realize the mysteriousness of the process of creation, the colonial's error of considering writing as a kind of display and the exploration of the truth that "to write is to learn." He confesses,

"Beginning a book I always felt I was in possession of all facts about myself; at the end I was always surprised. The book before always turned out to have been written by a man with incomplete knowledge."  

Naipaul inherited his ambition, and feeling for 'lettering' and 'printed word' from his father, a journalist, contributing to the Trinidad Guardian, occasional articles on Indian topics. Later on his father wrote stories and printed them. Naipaul was much excited and felt encouraged and thought "it seemed to be settled, in my mind as well as my father's that I would be a writer." His idea of a writer was associated with nobility. Even his Trinidad government scholarship at Oxford was to be used to get his "talent revealed" in writing books. In order to "become a writer, that noble thing, Naipaul left his father at Port of Spain to write, which was the beginning of self-knowledge." Later he reconstructs his ancestry and family history to explore his background "with little education and little English, in a small agricultural colony where writing was not an occupation" and to discover with wonder how his father developed the ambition to be a writer. Naipaul's father transmitted to his son "his hysteria" and "his fear of extinction" which "was linked with the idea of the vocation" and which could be "combated only by the exercise of the vocation." His father's illness in the Indian and the Creole World of Trinidad deeply moved him. To him his father was "a victim of the limited, poverty ridden backward Hindu World." The disorder, feuds and poverty that disturbed the peace of his father, resulted in Naipaul's grasp of the peace of his father resulted in Naipaul's grasp of the reality in jumbling and without sequence. The details provided by Naipaul in "Prologue to Autobiography" are
revealing and as Manjit Inder Singh rightly points out "foreground an idea of the fictional Mr. Biswas' Colonized State." 16

Coulthard has specified the following common characteristics, which shaped the creative sensibility of writers like Naipaul and was responsible for their grappling of the national ethos:

"The historical background in all the islands has followed the same pattern: discovery and conquest by the Spaniards, extermination of the native Indian populations and their replacement by slave-labour from Africa, the introduction of sugar and the world of the sugar estate, both during and after slavery, and independence at varying dates (Haiti first in 1804, with Jamaica and Trinidad gaining their independence as late as 1962). All the islands have known the common experience of colonialism exploitation, poverty and economic frustration. In all the islands racial discrimination has been a problem, and racial resentments and complexes continue to be an important factor. The last twenty-five years have seen the growth of middle class in all the islands, living largely on borrowed values (either American, British, or French) and an intelligentsia seeking urgently a spiritual and cultural orientation of its own." 17

Vidiadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul was born in Chaguanas, Trinidad, on 17 August, 1932, the eldest son of a second-generation Indian. He was educated at Queen's Royal College, Trinidad, and after winning a government scholarship in England at University College, Oxford. He married Patricia Ann Hale, his classmate in 1955. He worked briefly for the BBC as a writer and editor for the "Caribbean Voices" programme. His father Seeopersad Naipaul and mother Dropatia Capildeo Naipaul were of Indian extraction. Naipaul's grandfather was brought from India to Trinidad in the 1880s and he carried his village with him. Naipaul writes:
Half of us (Indians) on this land of the Chaguanares (in Trinidad) were pretending – perhaps not – perhaps only feeling, never formulating it as an idea – that we brought a kind of India with us, which we could, as it were, unroll like a carpet on the flat land.18

Naipaul thus grew up in an extended Hindu family of India bound by customs and conventions, rites and rituals and always trying to jealously guard the Indianess against the possible contamination of an alien culture. It was a ritualized life. But with every generation India became an increasingly distant object till with Naipaul India became more a legendary country than a real one, a resting place for imagination.

Seepersad Naipaul was a journalist and contributed occasional articles to Trinidad Guardian. It was from his father that Naipaul imbibed the ambition to become a writer. Naipaul was a bright student, and after his secondary school examination, at Queen’s Royal College he went to Oxford on a Government scholarship in 1950 at the age of eighteen. After leaving Oxford in 1954 he had a stint in the catalogue department of the National Portrait Gallery of London and then secured a position with the BBC writing and editing for the programme called Caribbean voices. It was during this period that he started writing stories drawing on his Trinidad memories which were later published as Miguel Street in 1950.

The tone is appreciably nostalgic and indulgent. Naipaul seems to believe that mimicry, imposture and fraud are historically inevitable as the out growth of a picaresque society evolving out of slavery and colonialism. Naipaul is cognizant of the harmful effects of mimicry but thinks that the characters who endure and indulge in mimicry have no other choice.

The unpredictable nature of Naipaul as a man makes it difficult to place him or identify him with any one particular tradition. He was born and to some extent brought up in Trinidad. His grandfather had
come from Bihar to Trinidad as an indentured labourer and had settled in Trinidad. Naipaul was educated in England. His belated visit to India created a cultural shock. The skeptical notions that he entertained about Trinidad made it impossible for him to call it his own. Trinidad to him is an unimportant, uncreative and cynical society devoid of achievement and history. About Trinidad he says:

"A peasant-minded, money-minded community, spiritually static because cut off from its roots, its religion reduced to rites without philosophy, set in a materialist colonial society. A combination of historical accidents and national temperament has turned the Trinidad Indian into the complete colonial, even more Philistine than the White."19

Everyone including an Indian is bound to exist there as an oddity as it encouraged only eccentricity. And being a society without traditions, everyone finds it easier to be an oddity. He has also admitted that the Americans do not accept him because he was too British and the English do not want him because he was too foreign. Further, as Anthony Boxill points out, "One cannot place Naipaul in the tradition of European culture because he lacks the optimism of writers who come from rooted societies."20

His first three books are comic portraits of Trinidadian society. The Mystic Masseur (1957) won The Mail on Sunday, John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1958 and was adapted as a film with a screen play by Caryl Phillips in 2001. Miguel Street (1959), a collection of short stories won a Somerset Maugham Award. His acclaimed novel A House for Mr. Biswas (1961), is based on his father’s life in Trinidad. His first novel set in England, Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion (1963) won the Hawthornden prize.

Subsequent novels developed more political themes and he began to write about colonial and post-colonial societies in the process of decolonization. These novels include The Mimic Men (1967), winner of the 1968 W H Smith Literary Award, In a Free State (1971),


V.S.Naipaul was Knighted in 1989. He was awarded the David Cohen British Literature Prize by the Arts Council of England in 1993 and the Nobel Prize for Literature on 7th December 2001. He holds honorary doctorates from Cambridge University and Columbia University in New York, and honorary degrees from the Universities of Cambridge, London and Oxford. He lives in Wiltshire, England.

Naipaul left Trinidad for Oxford at the age of eighteen with the ambition of being a writer, but he did not start writing seriously until he was nearly twenty three. Although there was a gap of five years
between conceiving the ambition and realizing it, twenty-three was a very young age to begin.

Nissim Ezekiel has convincingly refuted Naipaul's distortions in *An Area of Darkness* and underlined the compulsions under which a declassed artist has to work:

"My quarrel is that Mr. Naipaul is so often uninvolved and unconcerned. He writes exclusively from the point of view of his own dilemma, his temperamental alienation from his mixed background, his choice and his escape. That temperament is not universal, not even widely distributed, that choice is not open to all, and the escape for most is not from the community but into it."21

It is encouraging to note that with his maturity Naipaul has outgrown his earlier apathy to Indian situation and his book *India: A Million Mutinies Now* is milder in tone and compassionate in contention as the dust jacket puts it. This book can be regarded as another attempt to locate his centre because of his restlessness to be at home anywhere, certainly not in Caribbean, nor England, nor the US, not even India but "of all these places, it is India that engages Naipaul, the country his family left behind, a hidden but capital source of customs and ideas, a place of pride and shame."22 He was deeply impressed by certain Hindu institutions like the four-ashramas as evidenced by its artistic appropriation in *The Mimic Man*.

Numerous references to diverse scriptural aspects are to be found. It can be said in all fairness to Naipaul that he has never distorted the Indian philosophical content despite his over prejudice against India. With his encyclopedic range of reading and exposure to world-wide influences, he has achieved a distinction both in idiom and intention rarely found in contemporary writers.

In his Nobel lecture delivered on the award of one of the world's most prestigious prizes for a life's work as a writer, V.S. Naipaul made a characteristic observation. "Everything" he said, "of value about me
is in my books... I am the sum of my books ... I feel that at any stage of my literary career it could have been said that the last book contained all the others." Naipaul's award of the prize at the end of 2001 was long-awaited, yet it was the culmination of a career dedicated solely to the world of letters which has not been without its difficulties. This journey and the enigma of its many arrivals have been expressed over a period of nearly fifty years and through a variety of narrative forms ranging from fiction to travelogue, to autobiography and history.

Life was a journey in which it becomes clear, as one of his characters points out in his novel A Bend in the River, "home was hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost" (BR.17). Naipaul's fictional and non-fictional writings trace a self-conscious symptomatic response to the need to discover an appropriate literary form to frame a psychic and symbolic sense of homelessness. A need, as many have observed to write constantly about "unhousing" while still remaining unhoused, to find a way of inhabiting an inherited language and "tradition" which because of his 'colonial' education and childhood as a twice-removed descendant of a Brahmin indentured family in Trinidad, simultaneously alienated him. From an early age and even before his departure from Trinidad in 1950 to study English at Oxford as the 'Scholarship' boy, Naipaul nurtured the romantic notion of becoming a writer. But as he admits in a revealing 1964 essay Jasmine it was not easy, whatever the blinkered power of colonial fantasy, to extricate oneself from the predetermined plot of an Imperial history, to 'let his memory, rather than his pretension, speak.'

In addition, he had to find a voice to unmake the walls of the canonical house of English literature, a theme which culminates in the much loved fictional universe of A House for Mr. Biswas, a novel focusing on his father's life and his childhood amongst the East Indian Community in Trinidad. It was a novel he could not read again
for twenty years, but it was the one which made him famous and ended his so-called 'apprenticeship' as a writer in London.

Naipaul had to return to the significance of his father and his East Indian childhood in his later novels. Moreover, the significance of this relationship was intimately expressed in his recently published *Letters Between a Father and Son* (1999), letters which not only expose the anxiety of Naipaul's early life in Britain, but also reveal the extent to which his father, an unsuccessful writer who composed stories about ordinary lives in Trinidad, was to provide him with his first, significant literary model.

The desire to find authentic voice and a form, to discover a new architecture for the imagination which could move beyond a sense of recurrent 'shipwreck' and give expression to what he calls in *The Mimic Men*, a 'restlessness' and disorder resulting from a history Empire dominates the Naipaulian world. It is a preoccupation that surfaces implicitly in many of his characters whether in figures such as Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur* whose history, he tells that, it is the "history of our times" or, in his later narratives such as *In a Free State* or *A Bend in the River* which extend the fictional and non-fictional lens to Africa, South America, India, the US and Britain. In fact, it was his experimentation, in one of his first historical narratives, *The Loss of El Dorado* that led him to the belief (often expressed in his controversial travelogues of the 1980's and 1990's) that the novel was no longer an adequate vehicle for the expression of a world which requires what he has called 'a larger comprehension.'

The method Naipaul explores in *The Loss of El Dorado*, a technique of excavating individual life stories from the notes of his travels which are later worked into their fictional narratives, documentaries or semi-autobiographical pieces, becomes characteristic of his style in many of his publications of the 1980's amongst others, *Among the Believers* (1981), *A Turn in the South* (1989) and *India* (1990). For as in his semi-fictional, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), Naipaul returns
obsessively to review earlier preoccupations, circumnavigating both himself and his material with the hope of getting 'closer to the truth', however uncomfortable that truth may be.

The early novels become important and their significance lies in Naipaul's effective use of dialect. Opinion is varied about Naipaul's early novels in terms of achievement. Victor Ramraj comments on the light gay air of the early novels and views them as a farce, pure and simple, but some have described these novels as the comic but compassionate story. Naipaul is quite apologetic of his early novels which he calls works of apprenticeship and has even expressed his disapproval of the tone of unevenness. But a slight development is noticeable and this is particularly apparent in Naipaul's treatment of minor characters. Naipaul himself has disapproved of the notion that his novels should be viewed as satire; he rather wishes that he should be described as an ironist:

"I am not a satirist. Satire comes out of a tremendous optimism. One simply does not indulge in satire while one is awaiting death. Satire is a type of anger, irony and comedy, I think, come out of a sense of acceptance."\(^{25}\)

In one of his later essays, Naipaul expresses his desire to write a true satire which requires the direct vision and the compassion of a Tchekhov and a Dickens:

"True satire grows out of the largest vision ... that all embracing Christ-like vision ... today sights are set lower, satire is compounded of anger, which exalt what they seek to diminish."\(^{26}\)

Even in The Mimic Men, there is a comment:

"I wish to avoid satire ... it is that his situation satirizes itself, turns satire, inside out, takes satire to a point where it touches pathos if not tragedy."\(^{27}\)
About Naipaul's early novels it has been said that others have recorded, but that Naipaul "has given us the very smell, taste and tempo of life in the Indian locations of Trinidad."

Naipaul's novels especially the novels of the first two phases explore the failures, futility, isolation, dispossession, rootlessness and valuelessness of this unanchored community. Though the cultural crisis of the West Indian immigrant has also been treated by writers like Samuel Selvon, Wilson Harris and Shiva Naipaul, and poets like Derek Walcott, Hendricks and Mervyn Morris, V.S. Naipaul's is probably the most detailed and illuminating analysis of it. Most of his works aim at defining "the setting, the historical time, the racial and social complexities of the people concerned."

The link between the two texts, one is a piece of documentary writing, one is a novel – had already been observed at the time of the publication of *Guerrillas*. But the importance of the tension between fact and fiction in Naipaul's art has long been recognized, still the relationship between these two texts has not been closely analysed. Michael Neil mentions it briefly in his *Guerrillas and Gange*: "Like his prototype, Michael X, the plaything of London's radical achic, Jimmy ...." Hana Wirthnesher devotes two paragraphs to it in her *The Curse of Marginality: Colonialism in Naipaul's Guerrillas*, but she states that "the major changes are in the case of characters" and narrows her observations and comments to the most obvious of those. Yet the killings in Trinidad is a text of more than eighty pages in its final version: very interesting in its own right, and even more so as a pattern-book for Naipaul's fictional world of *Guerrillas*.

V.S. Naipaul's complex art of fiction is of a remarkably coherent nature. Its core is an analysis of the complexities of the relationship between the colonizer and colonized, literally and metaphorically, on the personal, social, historical and linguistic levels. One way in which Naipaul's art describes these complexities is in terms of place, and of
not belonging to any place; a physical distance; described in terms of travelling, which can be summarized by the idea of exile. In an article entitled *The Freedom of Exile*, Andrew Gurr states that it is **In a Free State** that Naipaul reaches the fullness of his vision of the exile:

"Thereafter everywhere is alien, man is an urban guerrilla, and even the Trinidad of his next book, *Guerrillas*, is a foreign landscape .... The books which have followed **In a Free State** are in their central position essentially repetitions of the position explored in the 1971 book."^{32}

Naipaul regards the novel as "a form of social inquiry" rather than "an opportunity for autobiography and boasting."^{33} His own fiction is both a creative interpretation of past and a criticism of the contemporary life. It emerges as an authentic account of the agony and the pride, the trials and tribulations of his people. Both the Negro and the Indian suffered dislocation, but the fate of the latter is pathetically tragic, his experiences were far more bewildering and his problems of adjustment far more acute. Distinguishing between the attitudes of the two immigrant communities Naipaul remarks in *The Middle Passage*:

Much of the West Indian Negro's drive arises out of his desire to define his position in the world. The Indian with no such problem is content with his narrow loyalties .... Indian politicians have created Indian racialism out of a harmless egotism. Negro racialism is more complex. It is an overdue assertion of dignity, it has elements of bitterness, it has something of the urban mob requiring to be satisfied with bread and circuses. It has profound intellectual promptings as well, in the realization that the Negro problem lies not simply in the attitude of others to the Negro, but in the Negro's attitude of others to the Negro, but in the Negro's attitude to himself. It is as yet confused, for the Negro, while rejecting the guilt imposed on him by the White man, is not able to shake off the prejudices he has inherited from the White man."^{34}
One may not accept Naipaul's neat distinction, but the problems of Indian immigrants are no myth but reality. The task of giving a really faithful picture of them was not easy. It was further complicated by the fact the Caribbean Society underwent uprootings more than once. As Naipaul reminds in his Autobiography —

"So there was a migration from India to be considered a migration from within the British Empire. There was my Hindu family, with its fading memories of India, there was India herself. And there was Trinidad, with its past of slavery, its mixed population, its racial antagonisms and its changing political life, one part of Venezuela and Spanish empire, now English-speaking, with the American base and an open-air cinema at the end of Bogart's Street."35

Naipaul writings dealt with the cultural confusion of the Third World and the problem of an outsider, a feature of his own experience as an Indian in the West Indies, a West Indian in English and a nomadic intellectual in a post-colonial world. Naipaul has always invoked much controversy because of his views of the half made societies. He has refused to avoid unwelcome topics, characterizing his role as a writer “to look and look again, to relook and rethink.”36 Naipaul is not somebody who concerns himself about keeping anybody happy, or being politically correct. He asserts, “writers are not pamphleteers twisting the truth, angling it. I would like to be judged as an imaginative writer with a shade of experience.”37

A descendent from labourers who went from Eastern Uttar Pradesh to the West Indies Naipaul considered himself a man without a country. Although Trinidad born, he has lived in England since his Oxford days. Piqued by his rootlessness, he looked with penetrating insight at a number of countries, especially, Third World Nations. His insights have hurt many. Asked about this his reply in an interview to Newsweek was “when people are wicked, you tell them they are wicked. If people are cruel you tell them they are cruel. If they are not
aspiring, and are lazy, you have to tell them that you have to do that – that's part of it, part of writing.  "38

Naipaul assumed the responsibility of delineating as honestly as possible the dilemma of the Indian immigrant's fractured consciousness, resulting from factors like transplantation, exploitation, rootlessness and so on. George Steiner is of the view, that "the Modernist Movement can be seen as a strategy of permanent exile." 39 He places Nabokov, Burgess and Beckett at the centre of this Movement. Meenakshi Mukherjee, however, feels that some Commonwealth writers like Naipaul should also be taken to belong to the same category, for "their apprehension of reality has been affected by the experience of more than one country and conditioned by exposure to more than one culture." 40 It would be worthwhile to analyze Naipaul's delineation of the predicament of Indian immigrants and their descendents in the Caribbean islands.

V.S. Naipaul's travelogues are good and many, descriptive and interesting, truthful and provocative. His travel accounts are varied and picturesque. In the Listener, Nicholas Mosley aptly observes about V.S. Naipaul: "A highly skillful writer ... he spins his webs, his patterns, not so much to entrap the reader, as to make him think for himself." 41 Ian Buruma remarks "Naipaul writes like a painter .... Whatever his literary form, he is a master." 42

Travelogue is a work of art like any form of literature. It is a genre of historical-realistic fictional work. V.S. Naipaul has written a dozen of travelogues. His travelogues have been greatly read and admired. Elizabeth Waterson says that a travelogue is a diary and narrative of travel, sport and adventure. It is, she states, "a blend of description, anecdote and personal commentary." 43 A travel book is an appreciation of life, a writer has seen and heard. Nilkant Nadkarni calls his travelogue an "unembellished record of my passing impressions." 44 Since a travel record mirrors the things, objects and
views seen, heard and observed, it is the registration of the physical, emotional and intellectual reactions of the traveller.

Naipaul’s early novels The Mystic Masseur, The Suffrage of Elvira and Miguel Street, evoke the life of a tradition ridden, decadent society based almost entirely upon the degrading and demoralizing facts of colonialism. It is a world without scientists, engineers, soldiers or poets. The people, by and large, lack cultural ties with their heritage. As is clear from the novel Miguel Street, the past in this society is generally non-existent, “a thing without a name.” (89) The street represents the deprived and captivating world of its inhabitants. It is also symbolic of the confusion of life, the chaos of values and the lack of guiding norms in the communities. This, as the novelist sums up are “crazily mixed up” here. (110) The State of affairs is aptly suggested in the novel. The stray mongrel dog is a befitting symbol of the life people lead.

An Area of Darkness is not a travel book. It was written neither during the travels nor from the diary notes. Naipaul has said that it was a very difficult book for him to write. He found the experience of India too personal, too private to be turned into fiction – attempt to do so had to be abandoned. In this regard Derek Walcott mentions what Naipaul has observed,

“It was about ten to twelve weeks after I got back that I began to try to write something. And then it was like plaything with the beginning of a novel....”

The experience of a journey becomes the means of an exploration of the self and the Penguin edition classifies the book An Area of Darkness as an autobiography. Critics like William Walsh and D.J. Enright have remarked on the extremely personal nature of the book. Walsh writes:
"Naipaul’s return to India is as much a research into himself as into another country. He is crawling in sensitive naked feet up through the tunnels of his own self."47

Similarly D.J. Enright suggests,

"The book is not exactly about a journey, a country, but largely about himself, a hybrid production, part novel, with himself as hero, villain, victim and at times clown."48

In an interview with Andrew Robinson, Naipaul has confessed in An Area of Darkness, "Yes, it’s about me really, being an Indian immigrant in Trinidad."49

An Area of Darkness has evoked amazingly divergent and diverse critical responses. John Wain describes the book as "tender lyrical explosive and excellent."50 V.S. Prichett calls it "most explosive and exciting."51 Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah and Nissim Ezekiel have analysed it searchingly and exposed Naipaul’s arrogance, lack of sympathy, his failure to find identity in India. Dom Moraes accepts Naipaul as "a writer of our times." He views An Area of Darkness in a larger perspective and he feels sorry that it "has come in for much unwanted criticism in India. He calls it not only a brilliant piece of literature but an interesting psychological study of Naipaul by Naipaul."52

Naipaul’s opinion is based on impression rather than information. It is a picture of India as Naipaul sees it. After this (An Area of Darkness) the richly textured islands of his earlier work would disappear, to be replaced by a series of largely interchangeable caricatures of societies depicted as ‘half made’ in comparison with Europe ... predictably, this turn in Naipaul’s work proved immensely popular in the West and he was quickly canonized for his indictment of the Third World. "It is a measure of his influence that in the West today, travel writers are taken seriously only to the degree in which they are able to replicate the familiar Naipaulian tone of division."53
wrote Amitav Ghosh. All this and many other things have diluted the artistic impact of the book.

Most of his writings issue from a desire to understand his own position in the world. The unique combination of circumstances which related him to three societies, and yet left him with a deep sense of homelessness, undeniably play a predominant part in shaping his sensibility and determining his writing career. He set out to discover himself and his world through his work. He himself writes "most imaginative writers discover themselves and the world through their work." There is a strong autobiographical element in all his works. Bruce King writes, "while the novels and short stories have seldom been about himself, they have reflected the various stages of his disillusionment with Trinidad, his despair with India and his concern with being a homeless ex-colonial." There is a marked socio-political context to all his writings, and his personal outlook and experience constitute the matrix of all his works. He said, "the only way we have of understanding another man's conditions is through ourselves, our experiences and emotions...."

Writing for Naipaul is basically an ordering for experience. To him a writer's imagination ceaselessly processes and is engaged in ordering of experiences. Landeg White writes, "Naipaul is a shaping rather than an inventive imagination." Fact is shaped into fiction, and fiction itself is seen as an understanding of the factual world. Literature and life interpenetrate, fiction and non-fiction complement and counterpoint each other. Many of his novels are well outside the limits of what one expects from a traditional work of fiction. Some are historical, some personal, some traditionally novelistic. It would be more accurate to describe his novels as 'factions' part fact part fiction or as he explained in an interview "there is a crust of fact beyond that the writer's fantasy is working."
Naipaul approvingly quotes Evelyn Waugh’s definition of fiction as experiences totally transformed. Naipaul is the product of a distinct combination of circumstances. A Brahmin Hindu born in Trinidad, he is an Indian by ancestry, a Trinidian by nativity and British by residence, as well as intellectual training. He found the squalor of Trinidad stifling to his spirit. The Hindu family life seemed irrelevant and meaningless, within the family he was closest to his father, the pain of whose frustrated life he felt and shared acutely. All this had generated a passionate desire to escape all that had doomed his father to defeat. He insists "when I get to your age, I don't want to be like you" and decided to leave Trinidad when he was still a school boy. The India which was the background of his childhood was just an area of darkness, the centre of his world he felt was London, "I came to London, it had become the centre of my world. I had been misled."

Naipaul spent his childhood and youth in Trinidad. The bond between father and son and the Hindu background – these three strands of his personal life were conspicuous shaping factors of Naipaul’s sensibility. His multiple inheritances and the peculiar displacement which left him connected to three societies and yet belonging to none has not only been the impelling force behind his writings but also its very subject.

Naipaul’s father was his Guru “My father was extremely important in my childhood.” He confides, “Nearly everything I am, I am because of this great link I felt with him” he said in an interview to Nigel Bingham. In the last piece of Return, “Conrad’s Darkness” he acknowledges his impact on his writing. The essay also throws light on the closeness with his father,

"My father was a self taught man, picking his way through a cultural confusion of which he was hardly aware, and of which I have only recently begun to understand and he wished himself to be a writer. He read less for pleasure to be a writer."
He read less for pleasure than for clues, hints and encouragement and he introduced me to those writers who had come upon in his own search. Conrad the stylist, but, more than that Conrad the late starter, holding out hope to those who didn't seem to be starting at all.  

He read Conrad, Marcus Aurelius to his children and encouraged them to fulfil his ambition. Naipaul's memory of his father teaching him is one of togetherness, the two of them alone.

Naipaul had gone to London to be a writer, but when he turned his thought to writing he did not know how to turn the life he knew in Trinidad into the kind of book he had grown up reading. It dawned on him that the literary tradition he had grown up accepting as his own belonged to an alien society. The alien vision made him see his own society as pretty not the stuff for books. The way out was shown by his father's stories. In an interview to David Bates he said "other writers are aware that they are writing about rooted societies, his work showed me that one could write about another kind of society."

Having grown in a joint family, surrounded by uncles and aunts and fifty odd cousins about which he wrote "the large sprawling Hindu joint life was like a crash course in the world. You learned about cruelty, about propaganda, about the destruction of reputation, you learnt about forming allies." His journalistic father felt stifled by this family life that left no room for privacy. "I think its fair to say that our father found his family environment crippling and was almost destroyed by it" felt Shiva Naipaul, his younger brother. Seeing their father's isolation, he grew protective towards him.

The deep feeling for his father, and the desire to fulfil his father's frustrated ambition to be a writer was the vital emotional impetus behind Naipaul's work. He felt compelled "And before I died, before I became so removed from any talent, I wanted to write a book about my father and my background, the anger and the terrible ambition the sense of loss and defeat that made me want to be a..."
A poignantly revealing comment was "out of the debris of our life the career continues through me."\textsuperscript{67}

Naipaul's early work was a kind of offering to his father, an act of homage and fulfilment of a promise made to him. In the Foreword to \textit{The Adventures of Gurudeva}, a collection of his father's short stories, Naipaul spoke movingly about the pains of his father's defeated life,

"My father never in his life reached that point of rest from which he could look back at his past. His last years when he found his voice as a writer, were years of especial distress and anxiety, he was part of the dereliction he wrote about."\textsuperscript{68}

The dominant theme of the seven stories is entrapment and escape, which is also the theme of the first four novels of Naipaul.

\textbf{The Mystic Masseur} presents the picture of the West Indian society, its crisis and challenges, in a more systematic way. As M.K. Naik points out, "Naipaul's main aim in \textit{The Mystic Masseur} seems to be to exploit the comic absurdity in the lives of the transplanted Indians in the West Indians."\textsuperscript{69} The novel charters the progress of Ganesh Ramsumair, the central character in the novel, and his relationships with the others with clarity and irony. He is in the beginning an unknown schoolmaster but becomes later a masseur, a mystic and an MLC. Eventually he rises to such dizzy heights of eminence that the British rulers of the island make him an MBE.

The Indian immigrants dilemma has been delineated in a more realistic way in \textit{A House for Mr. Biswas}, which has been claimed by critics to be Naipaul's most important work. Though written at the age of twenty-nine, the novel presents the problems and plights of a whole people. It is "conceived and executed in the great tradition of the colonial experience as anything in imaginative literature."\textsuperscript{70} It is the character of Mohan Biswas against his background that imparts the striking success to the novel. Mr. Biswas' complex and insightful
story is the story of the community he belongs to. The novel is said to have a direct bearing on the important modern problem of the “crisis of identity.”

The Mimic Men is a more substantial novel than the earlier novels. The narrative is in the form of the dramatized reminiscences of an exiled politician. It presents a detached understanding of a violated, colonial society. The novel explores “the ways in which the conscious individual in a given society establishes modes of mediation between himself and his experience.” In a mixed society like the West Indian, an individual faces multiple problems of adjustment. Farrukh Dhondy, reviewing Naipaul’s In a Free State, remarks:

“We demand of an artist, especially a writer, that he has his finger on the pulse of the essential creation of his time, more today than ever before. The sustenance that Naipaul drew from the English literary tradition is now inadequate and starves his vision....Naipaul’s characters are all emergents from a transient planetary age of mimic men.”

A Bend in the River (1979) portrays expatriates or migrants adrift in various states of disorder. It is one of the best books in Naipaul’s fictional career which studies the sensibility of Salim, the narrator hero. A prominent theme in this novel is the destructive effect of substituting theatre for practicality, the heroic pose for political restraint in the post-colonial, Third World, specifically a black African state resembling Zaire. Naipaul is intensely interested in what happens to the individual in a colonial ethos. In a way the novel marks a limit to the desperate journey of Salim in his search for place and identity. In an interview Naipaul said that “he chose the title of A Bend in the River for the uplift in it.” Such uplift is far from being immediately apparent in the novel.

His recent novel Half a Life was published in 2001. Half a Life, in which the life of Willie Somerset Chandran closely paralleled Naipaul’s own, won many admirers. It was hoped that Naipaul would
eventually give readers the other half of that life. Willie Chandran's life started in India, moved to London for his studies and then to Africa. Naipaul visited India with the intention of rediscovering his cultural heritage which had been obscured if not confused by his associations with the West Indies and England, but the encounter proved disastrous because the India of his fantasies contrasted considerably with the actual India he saw. In *Half a Life* he presented caste system and the mind set of Indians. To W. Dissanayaka, Carmen and Wikramagamage, Naipaul's ideological stance is unambiguous. They claim that "from his very young days, V.S. Naipaul decided to adopt the colonial gaze as a matter of conscious choice, to distinguish himself from the rest of society....A consequence of the adoption of the colonial gaze is to perceive everything indigenous as inferior, cheap and substandard."75

Finally, Naipaul's eminence as a writer of world status is really in no need of further attestation. Naipaul's life and vision form a seamless whole.
REFERENCES


10. Ibid, p.28.


15. Ibid, p.74.


35. V.S. Naipaul, Autobiography, p.45


51. Ibid. p.93.


61. Interviewed by Nigel Bingham, p.306.


63. Interview with David Bates *Sunday Times*, May 26th, 1983.


