PREFACE

The present doctoral study entitled, ‘INDIAN’ WEST INDIAN THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF V.S. NAIPAUL: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF INDIAN DIASPORA makes a modest academic endeavour at blending the social science and literary approach and framework to study and analyse the variant aspects, elements and essences of Indian diaspora in the West Indies and how these diasporic elements have been delineated in the writings of V.S. Naipaul. In the title of this study ‘INDIAN’ has been put in single inverted commas in order to hypothesise and analyse, how much ‘Indianness’ Indian West Indians carry and how much ‘West Indian’ they are or have become. Indeed, the dilemma of the Indian West Indian of being either West Indian or Indian or neither nor or both will always haunt him until he first of all comes to terms with himself and pierces into his ‘self’; and this process certainly involves an understanding of his Indian connection with a West Indian bonding. The variant ideas, aspects and contours of homeland, selfhood, dislocation, identity, different paradigms of diaspora, the West Indian social stratification, Indian diaspora’s position and role in the West Indian social canvass and V.S. Naipaul’s writings constitute the basic fabric of the study.

Such a study admittedly goes beyond the realm of social sciences and, or humanities. Attempt therefore has been made to position the present study somewhere at the intersection of social sciences importantly history, sociology, anthropology and political science, and humanities particularly cultural and literary studies. One of the primary objectives in taking such an eclectic approach is to gain useful insights from the writings of V.S. Naipaul so as to throw new lights on the above mentioned aspects of diaspora, immigration and identity. It must therefore be stated at the outset that the research methodology, rather research methodologies employed in the present study draw from varied social science approaches and those employed by literary and cultural studies. It may sound varied but remains otherwise a modest effort to combine varied approaches; only the reader of the monograph can judge the success or otherwise of this academic effort.

V.S. Naipaul is a prolific writer of fiction, stories and commentaries on contemporary events. Similarly writings on the ethnic and racial kaleidoscope of the Caribbean are
enormous. This is for the reason that the present study draws heavily from the more well-known writings of V.S. Naipaul and authoritative sources on the history, sociology and politics of the Caribbean. Giving the time bound nature of a doctoral study and reliance on source materials available in the leading libraries of Delhi and Calcutta the present study has made exhaustive use of the source materials.

Positioning the Indian diaspora in the West Indies and keeping in the background their diverse dynamics and the writings of V.S. Naipaul the study has been broadly divided into six chapters and subsequent sections and subsections. The first three chapters basically focus on the theoretical aspects of diaspora, the Indian diaspora in the West Indies and the social stratification in the West Indies, thus preparing the ground and a framework to study the diasporic paradigms in the writings of V.S. Naipaul. The other two chapters analyse the writings of V.S. Naipaul keeping in mind his diasporic sensibility and exilic self. The sixth chapter is in the form of summary and conclusions and it summaries the ideas and aspects delineated in the five chapters by providing concluding remarks. Basically V.S. Naipaul’s early writings such as The Mystic Masseur, The Suffrage of Elvira, Miguel Street and A House For Mr. Biswas and his writings on India such as An Area of Darkness, India: A Wounded Civilisation, and India: A Million Mutinies Now have been taken for analysis.

Etymologically derived from the Greek term diaspeirein, from dia-, “across” and -speirein, “to sow or scatter seeds”, diaspora may be perceived as the naming of the ‘other’ which carries a sense of ‘displacement’; that is, communities of people who have been dislocated or separated from their native homeland or national territory, as a consequence of colonial expansion, through the movements of migration, immigration, exile or voluntary aspiration to leave the country and these people contemplating a hope, or at least a desire, to return to their homeland at some point, if the “homeland” still exists in any meaningful sense. This sense of displacement gives rise very profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to lost origins, to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning. And this “return to the beginning” can neither be fulfilled nor requited, and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search and discovery. V.S. Naipaul has this ‘discovery’ as his recurrent theme. So, the core genesis of perception and understanding behind the
realm of a diasporic writing or diasporic 'discourse' or that of V.S. Naipaul principally relates to the historical and socio-cultural junctures and dimensions through which the populace of a country has undergone alteration and transformation in the critical process of immigration, adaptation and adoption and the kind of inner conflict and tension germinating out of this critical process.

The First Chapter of the study entitled, *THEORISING DIASPORA* attempts at conceptualising and theorising various aspects, notions, ambiguities and dynamics of diaspora by contesting it with nationalism, trans-nationalism, globalisation, ethnicity, multiculturalism, diversity, indentureship etc., which in turn helps in understanding and comprehending various contours and dynamics of diaspora. A psychological approach has also been made to pierce into the minds and psychology of the diasporic subject, which indeed helps in analysing and critiquing the mental working of the diaspora.

This chapter also examines, within an interdisciplinary frame, both the historical phenomena of migrations and diasporas and how these movements also inflect identity formation in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, culture, diversity, pluralism etc. If one is to take the lessons of interdisciplinary seriously, it is incumbent on one to examine how work in ethnic studies, communication studies, area studies, and cultural studies, as well as sociology and anthropology, provides one with the tools to understand the lived experiences of diasporic subjects. It is also pertinent to point out the relevant actors and their roles in diasporic studies, the social and political functions of diaspora, how does diaspora differ from other migrations and how does diaspora theory link to other theories.

So, the theoretical parameters of the diasporic study needs to be broadened to conceptualise and embrace these diverse groups and the variant dimensions of diasporic discourse. Along with these above mentioned theoretical contours and paradigms of the diasporic study, some other methodologies and frameworks like, indenture poetics, cultural persistence, adoption, adaptation, ethnicity, cultural, conjunctural / hyphenated identity, multiculturalism, pluralism, diversity, syncretism, psychological tools like, mourning, melancholy, trauma, memory, and imaginary, globalisation, nationalism, trans-nationalism, linguistic models, core-periphery model
and colonial attitude etc. have been applied to study diaspora. This theoretical base prepares a very firm ground in studying and analysing in a very critical and analytical manner the Indian diaspora in the West Indies, the social stratification in the West Indies and the diasporic elements in the writings of V.S. Naipaul.

One of the most prominent strands of the West Indian social stratification and a significant trajectory in the Indian history embarks on the 1830s with the shipping of indentured labour to the distant plantation estates of the West Indies to mitigate the demands of stiff labour required to run the plantation estates after the abolition of slavery and emancipation of slaves. The pattern of Indian indentured labour migration to the West Indies and the harsh and struggling lives of the Indians at the distant plantation barracks and their prime organisational patterns like, language, caste and religion and how these aspects have germinated identity for the Indians form the basic core of the Second Chapter of the study entitled, \textit{INDIAN DIASPORA IN THE WEST INDIES: AN OVERVIEW AND AN INSIGHT}. Other aspects like, food, clothing, family life etc. also have some significance in the Indian diasporic study, but this chapter is confined to the analysis of indentureship, language, caste and religion as these aspects provide broader frameworks in studying and analysing the Indian West Indians and they have been quite formative in sprouting a socio-cultural and political niche for Indian West Indians.

The socio-cultural structure of the West Indian societies lies in a paradox, sometimes making the social scientists, researchers and cultural critics pierce into the mind and soul of the West Indian and say, West Indians are similar; and at the other time, to their surprise West Indians look so detached with their differences. The paradoxical as well as the interesting aspect of the West Indian society is that at one end West Indians practice insularity and at the other end they try to promote their ‘West Indianness’ and this paradox leads the researchers to make critical endeavours to study the evolution and stratification of the West Indian society. At the outset it should be mentioned that every West Indian island country has a history and society of its own, but in spite of these differences West Indian countries share much commonalities in their similar kind of experience of European colonialism and socio-cultural patterns. Keeping the Indian diaspora in the background, in the Third Chapter of the study entitled, \textit{SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE WEST INDIES} an attempt
has been made to study the socio-cultural evolution of the West Indian society and it also tries to point out the diverse constituents that have formed the edifice of the West Indian socio-cultural structure. It is highly essential to study the evolution and stratification of the West Indian society not only because it provides the tool in determining the place of the Indians in the West Indian social structure or it provides a framework to critique and analyse the works of V.S. Naipaul, but also because it provides variant amenities in exploring and examining the nature of the ethnic and other kinds of conflicts occurring in the West Indies, and most prominently, why the West Indians have failed in germinating and maintaining a common West Indian identity despite their societal pluralism.

Since the diasporic experiences are varied, the diasporic literary works are differentiated in terms of tone and tenor, vision and values, and the complex combinations of experiences. But for an individual or writer like, V.S. Naipaul, who is twice or thrice born, having an ancestry in India, born in the West Indies (Trinidad), a dwelling in the metropolis (England), courting a diasporic sensibility and possessing an exilic self, it becomes very complex to bind him and analyse and frame his works or writings. In the Fourth Chapter of the study entitled, **DIASPORIC SENSIBILITY IN V.S. NAIPaul'S WRITINGS**, keeping the diasporic framework in mind an attempt has been made to examine some of the early writings of V.S. Naipaul, basically focusing on the struggles of Indians, their identity quest, occupational mobility, cultural confusion of the West Indians, especially, Indians, other socio-cultural dimensions of the West Indian society and Indians’ encounter with the other West Indians in the West Indian socio-cultural setting. At the same time the diasporic and exilic sensibility and self of V.S. Naipaul, as that of Indian West Indians have also been pointed out.

V.S. Naipaul as a migrant as well as a creative writer treads on a very fertile cross road between an immediate homeland, his family history and the compulsions of migration as he draws the picture of his home country. By questioning the identity of India beyond geography and place, the point of view of the migrant writer helps to broaden the framework within which India is defined. Naipaul's world view strikes an ambivalent relationship with his experiences in India. Diasporic consciousness and exilic self, and the resultant sensibility that stands as the core genesis to cross-cultural
or expatriate or diasporic discourse or writing is the perspective through which Naipaul's Janus-faced relationship and affiliation with India needs to be studied and analysed. With this framework and treasure in the background Naipaul’s status as ‘twice or thrice born or removed’ individual and writer with diasporic consciousness; his exilic self laying in mediation, alienation, and syncretism; a kind of cultural dislocation, or shock, or collision characterising his writings on Third World people and societies; and his celebration of ‘nationlessness’ as a mark of liberty of exhibition of sensibilities, Chapter Five of the study entitled, BETWEEN DIASPORA AND 'DARKNESS': 'HOMELESSNESS' FOR V.S. NAIPAUL attempts at examining and critiquing V.S. Naipaul’s idea, perception and representation of India in his writings.

Summarising the core ideas and deliberations delineated in the previous five chapters of the study the Sixth Chapter entitled, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS critiques and provides concluding remarks. Indeed it is very difficult to provide a concluding statement on any study of diaspora as diaspora covers such a broad spectrum and it has been perceived variantly by diverse people. This study is an attempt at understanding on my part of the different dynamics of diaspora, the West Indian social structure and how they have been delineated in the writings of V.S. Naipaul.

Undoubtedly a field study in the West Indies would have enriched this research work, as it would have facilitated an opportunity to meet the Indian diasporic people and other West Indians and garner views of the Indian West Indians on India and other segments of the West Indian people and how other segments of the West Indian society perceive the Indian diaspora. Again visits to various research institutions, universities and libraries in the West Indies and interactions with the West Indian scholars could have been a good source of primary materials. In a sense a field trip to the West Indies would have made a better understanding of the West Indian sensibilities. But an abundance of primary and secondary source materials on this study available in the libraries of various universities and research institutions in India including that of the library of Jawaharlal Nehru University has greatly compensated for the absence of a field study to the West Indies. Also internet provides a valuable source of reference materials through opening access to various sources and websites. In the process of this research work my study has been mostly in different libraries of different universities and institutions, so I have quoted in some occasions from V.S.
Naipaul's same book published by different publishers, due to the availability of the book in that particular library. But the source has been properly mentioned. The texts of V.S. Naipaul constitute the primary source materials. The study follows a historical, descriptive and analytical method.

To reiterate, in its blend of social science and humanities the study remains interdisciplinary in approach.

Coincidently this research work is being completed in the death anniversary of my loving father who inspired me and persuaded me to pursue doctoral research and whom unfortunately I lost in the course of this doctoral research work. Like a diasporic aesthetics this research work as a part of my 'self,' lies in an in-between, mourning for the loss (of homeland) of my father and hope and joy (of a return to homeland) of its completion.

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