Chapter - I

Introduction

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul is the most prominent expatriate today. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature, carrying forward the legacy of Rabindranath Tagore. He is among the most eminent writers of the commonwealth countries, and has made significant contribution to postcolonial literature.

He is deeply concerned with the cultures of the colonized countries, the socio-political economic-cultural history of India. He records the transition period of India, from colonial dominion to independence. His early works place the society of Trinidad on the world literary map. The works also project him as a journalist, a successful novelist, a keen travelogue writer, and a nonfiction writer. He has a brilliant command on language and fascinating narrative techniques.

Naipaul in his fiction and non-fiction deals with the effects of colonialism and migration on the indigenous people. His writings depict the experience of dislocation and displacement both in the physical and the psychological sense. He has bluntly written about political corruption, oppression and revolution. His significant writings center on the themes of alienation, migration, displacement, search for identity, freedom and power. His travelogues portray the harsh realities about the political and social structures of various societies.

His five novels: The Mystic Masseur(1957), In a Free State(1971), A Bend in the River(1979), Half a Life(2001) and Magic Seed(2004) have been selected for an in-depth analysis from the point of postcolonial criticism because they trace Naipaul’s development as a writer as they belong to different phases of his career and they cover a variety of themes. The project will analyse postcolonial features like Eurocentrism,
ambivalence, exile, diaspora, displacement, hybridity, mimicry, identity crisis, alienation and other themes in the works under study.

Postcolonial Criticism is a set of theoretical and critical strategies used to examine the culture, literature, politics, and history, of former colonies. Post-colonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonised countries, or literature written in colonising countries which deals with colonisation or colonised peoples. It enables the examination of the relationship between colonisers and colonised in literature; and also examines whether a work is pro colonist or anti colonialist and why. It also helps to find out if the text reinforces or resists colonialist ideology. The post-colonial criticism helps to explore the dynamics of colonisation through literary works.

Many academic research works have been done on V S Naipaul but not much work has been done where post colonial study of novels selected is concerned. The project will fill in this lacuna and help in the advancement of knowledge in the Naipaul criticism.

The proposed work will make an attempt to find out the following questions:

- What is post colonial criticism, its background, its history, its key concepts and how far is it effective in the study of third world literature?
- Who are the major contributors to the theory of post colonialism?
- How does V.S. Naipaul’s personal life get reflected in his works?
- What are Naipaul’s major contributions to the field of literature?
- What are Naipaul’s award winning achievements and what makes him a Nobel Prize winner?
- What are the postcolonial themes in Naipaul’s work?
What is identity crisis as well as alienation?

Does Naipaul’s work have any such crisis as well as alienation?

Does Naipaul make a quest for order, identity and coherence in his works and does he find real identity in his works?

What are exile, diaspora and displacement?

Do Naipaul’s works reflect exile, diaspora and displacement?

How works of Naipaul deal with colonised characters, situations and issues?

Are Naipaul’s works symptomatic of cultural clash, hybridity, mimicry?

Does Naipaul’s sense of alienation emanate from his own acute sense of marginality?

Literature Review: Some of the books on V S Naipaul are:

*V.S. Naipaul: The Voice of Exile* by B.Chandra Joshi

*V.S. Naipaul: An Introduction* by Yashoda Bhatt

*V.S. Naipaul’s Fiction: In Quest of the Enemy* by Anthony Boxhill

*V. S. Naipaul: A Materialist Reading* by Seylwyn Reginald Cudjoe

*V.S. Naipaul: Writers and Their Work* by Suman Gupta

*A Study in Theme and Form: The Novels of V.S. Naipaul* by Shashi Kamra

*V.S. Naipaul: An Introduction to his Work* by Paul Theroux

*The Enigma of V.S. Naipaul* by Helen Hayward

The proposed methodology is a close textual analysis of the selected primary sources using the critical viewpoints offered by secondary material. The methodology includes a judicious study and use of articles, reviews, interviews, books, online sources and material related to the study. The study is based on critical theory and so
a study of the theory related to post colonialism has been made. The format and documentation is as per the latest MLA Handbook (Eighth Edition).

The present thesis helps in finding out answers to the important questions which are related to the colonizer and the colonised. It is also helpful in understanding the inner psyche of the human beings affected by colonialism. Naipaul’s five novels have been analysed through post colonialism. *The Mystic Masseur* is analysed through the perspective of ambivalence. *In a Free State* is analysed through the perspective of Eurocentrism, *A Bend in the River* is analysed from various perspectives of post colonialism. *Half a life* is analysed through the perspective of diaspora and the last novel *Magic Seeds* is analysed through the perspective of exile.

Naipaul’s novels have been analysed on various bases but the postcolonialism study of his novels has not yet been done. This thesis will surely add a new dimension to the study of the novels of Naipaul in the field of literature and enlightens the minds of human beings.