Chapter 1
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The phrase “literature of travel” or “Travelogues” is perhaps a new technique in the non-fiction. It stands close to the art of a journalist and yet different, fundamentally from the function and method of a journalist. The writer of this form makes use of an altogether new mode of expression. This technique enables the writer to occupy a privileged position and write in a form, cutting sharply away from the known literary forms. Thus, though in many respect the writer appears to function as a journalist he is neither given the position of a journalist nor does he wish to function as one, in a sense, he may be called the unacknowledged journalist who expresses his ideas and thoughts on a given situation of the society, country or event in his own proprietorial position.

Moreover the most outstanding feature of this technique is what may be called as the expression of the filtered truth. The writer usually describes things in a seemingly journalistic manner, but at the same time the artist grips the occasion to express his deep realisation, which takes the form of universal truth. It is this deposition of universal truth that gives a deep philosophical touch to the entire work.

In the travelogues, the writer while narrating his experiences, recreates his memory by linking his memories to a wider vision and experiences. It results into a creation of a literary piece, just like poetic illusion. Thus this literary form though similar to a type of journalistic truth is intermingled with writer’s conceptions, memories, knowledge reservoir ‘Reading the book is like stumbling into a modern museum of literary kinds’ (Fussell, Paul, The Road to Oxiana, VII). Thus this kind of technique which is at once different from the, journalistic art, notwithstanding the fact that it remains close to it is so effective, that such type of project has been tried by the significant writers of the common wealth literature. Among them are Isak
Dinesen, Amadi, Shiva Naipaul, V.S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Clark Blaise and many more.

Before elaborating on the travel writers mentioned and also others, let’s elaborate in detail the historical aspect of travel writings, and its development. Travel literature as we have known is travel writing of literary value. It records the experiences of an author, touring or visiting different places, may be for a purpose or pleasure. The various experiences, scenario, the cultural, social, political influences, faced by the writer, takes its place in the travel writings. It involves coherent narrative, events, and focuses on different regions, genres, which may appear as a typical guide book. We can in other words say that it is a literature that recounts, adventure, exploration and conquest.

One of the earliest known records of travel writings, where travelling was for the sake of travel, and then accounting the travel experiences, was done by Petrarch (1304-1374) in his work Mount Ventoux in 1336. In his work, Petrarch states that he went to the mountain top for pleasure of seeing the top of the famous height. In his account, he recollects his experiences about his climbing the mountain and at the same time making allegorical comparisons between climbing the mountain and his own moral progress of life.

Travelling further in the lane of historical aspects of travelogues, we get the reference of Michault Taillement, who was a poet for the Duke of Burgundy. He travelled through the Jura Mountain in 1430 and in his works we get an account of his personal reflection, his horrified experiences of the rock faces, slides, and the terrifying thunderous cascades of mountain streams Antoine da La Sale, author of *Petit Jehan de Saintre*, climbed to the crater of a volcano in the Lipari Islands in 1407, also gives us a nerve chilling experience of his adventure. He mentions his reason for his unexceptional episode as such:

*Because many people of diverse nations and countries delight and take pleasure, as I have done in times past, in seeing the world and things therein,*
and also because many wish to know without going there, and other wish to see, go and travel, so I have ... (52)

In 1589, Richard Hakluyt (1552-1616) published his book *Voyages*, which can be mentioned as a foundational text of the travel literature genre. Since then we get different accounts of travel, performed by a different class of people for different reasons; may be for leisure, to learn about art or architecture. One of the tourism literature pioneer, that needs to be mentioned was Robert Louis Stevenson (1850 - 1894).

Furthermore, if we study the development of travel literature, we come across the fact that travel literature became popular in medieval China during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279). The genre was called “Travel record literature” and in this period the travel account was written in narrative, prose, essay and diary style. On the other hand, travel literature author such as Fan Chengda (1126-1193) and Xu Xiake (1587-1641), incorporated a wealth of geographical and topographical information in their writings.

Later in 18th century, travel literature was commonly known as the book of travels, which consists of maritime diaries. In 18th century England, almost every famous writer worked in the travel literature form. If we look back, it appears that with the discoveries of new lands, and a development for new thirst for knowledge, led to a new genre of travel literature. The first wave of travel literature in the century following Columbus’ discovery, was full of heroic tales of crusades, conquest and pilgrimage. These types of travel writings were a collection of true history and record, and authentic narratives. Soon travel literature, acquired a status of an important source of knowledge.

Samerel Purchas was an English clergyman and compiler of travel literature. The original design of his *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (1613), was as a survey of people of the world and their religion. It received a great success, and he expanded it into his famous compilation
of travel literature, called as *Halcluytus Posthumus* or *Purchas His Pilgrims*. His works were used as a source of information about foreign lands and culture by philosophers.

If we furthermore study the history of travel writings, it is seen that up to the middle of twentieth century, i.e. the age of colonialism, the travel writings were largely European writings. The travel writings of the indigenous people of the colonies were ignored or suppressed. Similarly the travel writings of the women underwent the same consequences. Thus both women and colonized were restricted in the journeys they could make, and if they did travel, their travel experiences were considered secondary to the primary experience of (white) masculine exploration and discovery. Women and natives tend to be the objects of travel writing rarely the subjects. Fortunately, we do have thousands of narratives of women’s journeys, some of which are now being published for the first time.

Post colonial travel writing in English is narrowly defined as travel narratives by writers from the former British colonies especially India, Pakistan, Africa and the West Indies. Post colonial travel writings include journeys from periphery to the European centre or involve travel from one periphery to another.

After studying the history of travel writings, lets study the factors and circumstances that lead the development of travel writing. Shifting back to the older times, we see that there were many reasons, which made the individual’s travel beyond their own societies. Some travellers simply desired to satisfy their curiosity about the larger world. However, trade, business dealings, diplomacy, political administration, military campaigns, exile, flight from persecution, migration, pilgrimage, missionary efforts and the quest for economic or educational opportunities were more common inducements for foreign travel than was mere curiosity. But later with the development of means of transport, invention of fast, reliable, inexpensive forms of long distance transport, mass travelling emerged as a global promoter of foreign travel.
Historically considering, we find that with the invention of writing, records of foreign travel appeared. Fragmentary travel accounts appeared both in Mesopotamia and Egypt in ancient times. After the formation of large imperial states in the classical world, travel accounts emerged as a prominent literary genre in many lands, and they especially, made strong appeal for rulers desiring useful knowledge about their realms. The Greek historian Herodotus reported on his travels in Egypt and Anatolia while researching the history of the Persian wars. We also get the record of the Chinese envoy Zhang Qian who described much of Central Asia as far as Bactria (modern day Afghanistan) on the basis of travels undertaken in the first century, which searching for allies for the Han dynasty. Hellenistic and Roman geographers such as Ptolemy, Strabo, Pliny the Elder relied on their own travels through the Mediterranean world.

Later during the post-classical era, trade and pilgrimage emerged as major incentives for travels to foreign lands. Muslim merchants sought trading opportunities throughout the eastern hemisphere. They described lands, people and commercial products of the Indian Ocean basin from East Africa to Indonesia. While merchants set out in search of trade and profit, devout Muslims travelled as pilgrims to Mecca to make their Hajj and visit the holy sites of Islam. Since the Prophet Muhammad’s original pilgrimage to Mecca, millions of Muslims have followed his example and thousands of Hajjis have recited their experiences. One of the best known Muslim traveller Ibn Battuta began his travels with the Hajj, then went on to visit Central Asia, India, China, sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of Mediterranean Europe before returning finally to his home in Morocco. East Asian travellers were not quite so prominent as Muslims during the post classical era. Chinese merchants frequently visited South Asia and India, and devout East Asian Buddhist undertook distant pilgrimages. Between 5th and 9th century Chinese Buddhist, travelled to India to study with Buddhist
teachers, collect sacred text, and visit holy sites. We get the travel accounts of the experiences of many pilgrims in this period like Faxian, Xuanzang and Buddhist from Japan, Korea, and other lands also ventured abroad in the interest of spiritual enlightenment.

In medieval times in Europe, Christian pilgrims travelled to Jerusalem, Rome, Santiago De Compostela (in northern Spain) and other sites. After 12th century, however, merchants, pilgrims, missionaries, from medieval Europe travelled widely and left numerous travel accounts, of which Marco Polo’s descriptions of his travels and Sojourn in China is the best known. As they became familiar with the larger world of the eastern hemisphere, their travel accounts enriched the Europeans with information regarding commercial opportunities, and since then they started making effort to find out new and more direct routes to Asian and African markets. This illustrates that the travel records or rather travel writings, served various purposes, as a source of knowledge or in information for further exploration in these cases.

If Muslim and Chinese people dominated travel and travel writings in the post classical times, European explorers, conquerors, merchants and missionaries took centre stage during the early modern era. Eventually the Muslim and Chinese travel writings continued at a specific pace. The Europeans ventured to the distant corner of the globe and with the development of printing press, the European press churned out thousands of travel accounts that described foreign lands and people and provided us with an apparently insatiable appetite for news about the larger world. At this time the volume of travel literature was so great that several editors, including Glam Battistia Ramusio, Richard Hakluyt, Theodore de Bry and Samuel Purchas assembled numerous travel accounts and made them available in enormous published collections.

During the 19th century, European travellers made their way to the interior region of Africa and the America, generating a fresh round of travel writing. Meanwhile, European colonial administrators devoted numerous writings to the societies of their colonial subjects,
particularly in Asian and African lands. Later in the twentieth century numerous travel writings, were written and published, serving the purpose of diverted cause. So travel writings served the purpose of guidance in various fields.

Lets now study the travelogues in brief of India and Third world nations, of some prominent writers, so as to study their style, that they indulged in this literary form called as travelogues.

E. Amadi, in his book *Sunset in Biafra* emerges as a writer in English with a different kind of narrative pattern. In his style of writing he keeps off the central point. It doesn’t mean that he doesn’t have a central point, but, he keeping away from the central point, throws light on the central point from different angles. Similarly Isak Dinesen in her outstanding literary work entitled *Out of Africa* uses the same kind of technique. In this novel of hers, she describes her experiences in Africa, where she is found all the time recreating memories and pulling all the strings together to highlight an event with another event. She tries to explain an experience of sitting in front of a pilot in a plane as though, “You feel that he is carrying you on the out stretched palm of his hand, as the Djinn carried Prince Ali through the air and the wings that bear you onward are his” (250)

Similarly she describes her experience of flying over the hill and coming back to her home within minutes with Prophet Mohammed’s experience of going on Merage and coming back to his house with a twinkle of an eye.

Another writer who has successfully written travelogues is Shiva Naipaul. In his well known non-fiction novel *Journey to Nowhere* (1960) he describes his account, when he was sent as a reporter to write a story on the Jonestown massacre. Although he was not recognised as an official reporter like many other reporters who boarded the plane, he was in his own territory and was very well aware of the conditions, which he wrote in an unofficial book, in which he exaggerated the grisly condition of the suicide camp. He had been to California,
where the seeds of disaster had been sown and there from he worked out a metaphorical picture of the mass human suicide that took place in Jones Town. Thus, Shiva Naipaul has given a fine example of the travelogues which is a new journalistic work in which the writer appears as a global witness to every man’s tragedy.

To analyse Bharati Mukherjee’s travel writings, her *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, needs to be mentioned. In her work, an altogether new kind of literary work, in which the author is functioning as a reporter, a traveller, a writer with a mode to confess, and yet the author ultimately transcends above all such art to emerge finally as an artist of travelogues. India is deep rooted in the mind of Bharati Mukherjee. She likes to concentrate and find relief in her mood of solitude. She has masterly recreated her memory and experiences.

Clark Blaise, who settles down in Calcutta, is amazed to find all kinds of contradictions existing in the land known as India. He had been to Bombay, before coming to Calcutta, and thus in his travel writings he comments on the heart of Bombay, the important sites and places, the buildings, the footpaths, the subways. Similarly he makes very pertinent comment on the blending of commerce and community in India, he writes:

> It was because I learned quickly that in India commerce and community are the same thing, and both are of the street. When commerce disappears urban India becomes pale and hideous. India alerted me again to the basic social value, buying and selling knowing goods and providing goods - the original reason that people come together. (17)

In his travel writing Clark, also explores the characters that he comes across. His most interesting discovery of India appears, when he comes to examine an American driver in Indian roads. Clark Blaise is a French man, who sees India as a foreigner hence the voice of Clark is completely different, he is frank, an extrovert who is ready to be impressed by anything that appears remarkable in India.
Pico lyer was born of Indian parents in Oxford in 1952. He had travelled widely specially through Asia. His important travel writings include *Video Night in Kathmandu*, (1988) and *Falling of the Map : Some lonely places in the world* (1993). He doesn’t find any difference between a tourist and the traveller. For him a tourist sees places through the lens of his camera, whereas the traveller, tries more to disappear in to the scene himself.

He records the impression and feelings and experiences as that of a typical tourist. On his travels he talks to common man around, and interpret his views on the place as a typical tourist, who reacts as the place virtually appears, with no pre-grand design on it. He finds tourism as a blessing in many parts of the underdeveloped world, and it helps to generate new traditions even on the other hand it threatens some of the old ones, as well as awakens respect for certain crafts and customs. According to him there is a difference between olden days travel writings and today’s. Thus he puts :

In the old days, a travel writer from England would survey India with a very firm sense of ... an European inspecting a strange foreign culture. These days when someone like me goes to India … I’m a mongrel citizen inspecting a mongrel world and definitions all dissolve. So the old dialogue of self and other becomes a more porous, floating exchange between two bodies who overlap and merge in some ways, and separate in others. (18)

Another post colonial travel writer who needs to be mentioned is Frank Delaney. His travel book include *James Joyce’s Odyssey: A guide to the Dublin of Ulysses*, (1981), *Betjeman Country* (1983), *A walk to the Western Isles : After Boswell and Johnson* (1993). Frank sees himself as an observer. He is endlessly fascinated by watching them “over there”. He spends a lot of time thinking about their connection with his own country, about their colonization. He loves to be among them. Frank also observes in his travel writings that Travel, influences
identity, it has certainly influenced him, in that it has made him less Irish. Further Frank puts his reason for writing travelogues:

I write these books, with the intention of their becoming guide books. The reason I wrote the Joyce book was that I like so many people - as a younger man tried to read Ulysses and failed ... so I thought I will write a book about how difficult it is to read Ulysses. I will write a guide to Ulysses. (20)

Dan Jacobson, born in South Africa, is the author of several novels as well as travel books. Some of them are, The Electronic Elephant: A Southern African Journey (1995). Heshel’s Kingdom, a new travel book about his experience in Lithuania, the country of his maternal ancestors has been published recently. Dan in his travel books, has written about those places where generally the tourists don’t go. Dan in his travel books, makes the tourist a part of the natural scene there. He believes that without patronizing the tourist, we should just treat them as part of what he was observing.

Dervla Murphy is a well known travel writer of Ireland. Her prominent travel books include A Place a part (1978), Tales from two cities (1987), The Ukimwi Road (1993), Visiting 12 wands (1998). She distinguishes between a traveller and a tourist. While the tourist visits places with a purpose of recreation and sightseeing, the traveller, meaning a travel writer - visits places with a job. Her every journey, turned into a book. In her travel books, she makes use of other texts, such as for example, imperial travel books. She does this because by it she can compare her impressions, difficulties and the situations that she is in, with those of earlier traveller. Moreover, references to imperial travellers are a way of emphasizing their different approach to the country in comparison to her own.

The lone Indian artist who has explored the field of travelogues, successfully in his literary works is VS. Naipaul. Almost all his works are in the traditional journalistic forms, or in the form of travelogues and memoirs. V.S. Naipaul, in his books, intersects travel literature
with essay writing. Naipaul is considered as the leading novelist of the English speaking Caribbean, and is the winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 2001. Naipaul’s 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 England, and a nomadic intellectual in a post-colonial world. Naipaul has also arisen much controversy because of his politically views. Before peeping into the travel writings of V.S. Naipaul, lets study the life, birth, parentage and career of the author, as all these factors have a prominent role in shaping a person.

Vidyadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born on 17th August 1932 in Chaguanas on the island of Trinidad in the British colony of Trinidad and Tobago. He was the eldest son of his parents. His family has Indian Brahmin origin. His father Seoprasad Naipaul was a correspondent for the Trinidad Guardian. He also published short stories. When Naipaul was six year old, the family moved to Port of Spain. Seoprasad Naipaul died of a heart attack in 1953 without witnessing the success of his son as a writer. He had encouraged Naipaul in his writing aspiration. In a letter written to Naipaul his father wrote: “Don’t be scared of being an artist. D.H. Lawrence was an artist through and through; and for the time being at any rate, you should think as Lawrence. Remember what he used to say “Art for my sake” (149)

At the age of eighteen Naipaul wrote his first novel, which was rejected by the publisher. He has three sisters and a brother called Shiva, born in 1945, who too bloomed, as a writer, like his father and brother. Naipaul was educated at Queen’s Royal College, Port of Spain and in 1950 won a scholarship to Oxford to study English literature. Before that in 1949, Naipaul had taken some pictures of himself for his application to the university. The pictures of Naipaul had adverse effect on him. He wrote to his elder sister:

I never knew my face was fat. The picture said so. I looked at the Asiatic on the paper and thought that an Indian from India could look no more Indian
than I did. I had hoped to send up a striking intellectual pose to the university people, but look what they have got... (251)

After a nervous breakdown, he tried to commit suicide, but luckily the gas meter ran out, while at Oxford, he met Patricia Hale, and they married in 1955. She died in 1996 from cancer and Naipaul married Nadira Khannum Alvi, a divorced Pakistani journalist. After graduation, Naipaul started his career as a freelance writer. During this period Naipaul felt himself rootless, but found his voice as a writer in the mid 1950’s. From 1954 to 1956 Naipaul was a broadcaster for the BBC’s Caribbean Voices and between the year 1957 and 1961, he was a regular fiction reviewer for the New Statesman. His first published novel *The Mystic Masseur*, had won critical acclaim when it was published in 1957. This novel is about a bright young man, who dreams of becoming a famous writer. This work of Naipaul was adapted for the screen by Ismail Merchant. The book won The Mail on Sunday John Litwellyh Rhys Prize in 1958.

Though Naipaul’s first book did not make much money for him or his publishers, but he knew his value as a writer and thus refused to write a review for the *The Times Literary Supplement*, with their usual fee.

In 1959, *Miguel Street* was published. The story deals with a boy who grows up, starts to earn his own money and finally goes abroad to study. The book won a Somerset Maugham Award.

In 1961, appeared *A House For Mr. Biswas*, often regarded as his masterpiece. It is the legacy of his father’s life, and this book confirmed him a solid reputation as a man of letters. The book tells a tragicomic story of the search for independence and identity of a Brahmin Indian living in Trinidad.

The protagonist, Mohun Biswas, was partly modelled after the author’s father. Biswas has been unlucky from his birth, but all he wants is a house of his own - it is the solid basis of
his existence. The story fuses social comedy and pathos, follows his struggle in variety of jobs, from sign painter to journalist, to his final triumph.

Eric Williams, the prime minister of Trinidad, took notice of Naipaul’s achievement in fiction, and suggested that he should write a book length essay on his native region. Thus in 1961, he received a grant from Trinidad government to travel in the Caribbean. His first non-fiction book (travelogue) was *The Middle Passage* (1962). In this travel book he described his first revisiting of the West Indies. Naipaul’s view on racial tension made black West Indians call Naipaul a “racist”.

Then followed a series of travelogues by V.S. Napaul. *An Area of Darkness* (1964) recounts a similar disappointment with ancestral India. Working on his historical book on Trinidad, *The loss of El Dorado* (1969), he began to feel the pull of his native island, but the book was a failure at this time the Trinidad Society was coming apart in racial animosity, and Naipaul’s own health took a turn for the worse. He then returned to England, and England remained his home. His writings reflect extensive travel in Africa, India, the Muslim world and the United States.

After beginning *The loss of EL Dorado*, Naipaul did not keep up the steady pace of publication that had marked his earlier years. *A Flag on the Island* (1967) was a collection of Short Stories including Juvenilia tales of varying quality with the little unity of theme and tone. *In a free State* (1971) consists of two short stories, and selections from the travel journals. *The Overcrowded Barracoon and other Articles* came up in 1972, is a travel book. Naipaul continued to support himself as a writer and his journalistic assignments in Uganda, Trinidad and Zaire. Then followed a series of travel books, namely *In a Free State*, (1971), *Guerrilas* (1975), *India : A wounded civilization* (1977) and *A Bend in the River* (1979). This is a pessimistic novel about Africa, proclaiming the corruptibility of mankind. The story is set in a country like Zaire or Uganda. Salim the narrator is a Muslim, whose family members
were Indian Traders had lived in Africa since hundreds of years. Salim sets up a shop in a
town on the bend of the river and gains success. Again in this book, Naipaul’s protagonist is
an outsider, who realises that his way of life is almost at its end and eventually, he must give
up everything. “The bush runs itself, but there’s no place to go”, says Salim’s friend
Ferdinand, when he rescues Salim from a jail. “The bush” is Naipaul’s metaphor for the
country and the whole third world. Naipaul has been criticized for his remarks, seems as his
attitude towards Negroes.

Though V.S. Naipaul is one of the most well known post - colonial travel writers, but
he is sometimes criticized for seeing the world too much through western eyes and western
ideology. Post colonial writers were under pressure to voice their experiences, and with V.S.
Naipaul they obtained a path maker. On the same time, Naipaul’s attitude towards developing
countries such as India is that of disappointment, at their failure to modernize or their failure
to enter fully the frame of western history. Naipaul tends to offer rather harsh critique of post
colonial societies from the perspective of a member of such a society. A feature of Naipaul’s
travel writings, his point of view of as an outsider whose sense of house is complex. Most
travel writers write about foreign places with a clear sense of “where they are coming from”
i.e. where their home is and what is familiar and unfamiliar about it. Naipaul on the other
hand, never hesitates to give a negative view about his own people. This attitude of Naipaul
has estranged him from a number of critics and scholars who find his general tendency
politically perverse.

Naipaul wrote two books, about Islamic societies. They are Among the Believers : An
Islamic Journey (1981) and Beyond Belief : Islamic Excursion (1998). He was accused by
the Muslim readers of narrow and selective vision of Islam. Naipaul searches the sources of
the new Islam and the ideological rage. He writes “Islamic sanctified rage - rage about faith,
politically rage: one can like the other, and more than once on this journey I had met sensitive men who were ready to contemplate great convulsion (115)

His second book Islamic Excursions, portraits from his journey to the non-Arab Islamic countries of Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan and Malaysia. Naipaul here tries to understand the fundamentalist fervour that have marked the western image of the region. In Iran he meets war veterans, who express their disillusionment and their sense of being manipulated by the mullahs. In Indonesia, he meets his former friend, who became an established figure, an advocater of an Islamic future.

He has number of travel books, written about Caribbean. They are The Middle Passage: Impression of Five Societies - British, French and Dutch in the West Indies and South America (1962) and The Loss of El Dorado: A History, (1969). He also has published two collections of essays, The Overcrowded Barracooon and other Articles (1972) and The Return of Eva Peron (1980). The Writer and the World: Essays, was published in 2002, while Literary occasion (2004) is also a collection of essays. His latest book is A Writer’s People: Ways of Looking and Feeling (2007). Everything about Caribbean and Trinidad seems to upset Naipaul, which gets reflected in his work. He expresses his old fears of Trinidad. According to him, Trinidad is a society where power was recognized, but dignity was not allowed to no one. His travel books, illustrate about Caribbean and puts that every person of eminence was crooked and contemptible. We can understand Naipaul’s attitude towards Caribbean Community, because when Naipaul was awarded Nobel Prize for literature, in 2001, he did not get any recognition or response from the Caribbean community. Thus his writing closely echoes the distance, that he maintains from the Caribbean.

Naipaul further establishes in his travelogues that after being twenty years in England, he still had that nervousness as one has in a new place, the rawness of response. He still felt himself to be in another man’s country, felt like a stranger in solitude. But in his heart of
heart, he had always disowned Trinidad. In England, he was awakened by the nightmare, that he was back in Tropical Trinidad. It is ironic that being a child of the Third world, he disowned his origins. Naipaul by distancing himself from his birth place, he seems to have fallen in the same trap, as he sees the Caribbeans have fallen. Naipaul has written three travel books about India, namely: *India : An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India : A wounded civilization* (1977), *India : A million Mutines now* (1990). Naipaul had travelled to his ancestral India. Since childhood, India had been an attraction to him, whose grandfather had left as an indentured labour to work in the Empire’s Sugar Cane fields in Trinidad. For Naipaul, the journey was a personal quest for the diasporic self in search of origin. Naipaul travelled to India during a significant time. In early sixties when India was shedding her colonial skins after centuries of imperial rule and domination, the country was becoming a key player in the emergence of non-aligned movement. India was on the way to become the major post colonial nation on a global scale despite the problem of overpopulation, hunger, caste system and struggling for an economic reconstruction. These are the factors that Naipaul failed to textualize in his Indian travel writings. Naipaul’s sense of fear and dismay gets expressed in his book on India *An Area of Darkness*, where he states:

… at sunset, a wide shining arc in the winter sea … the engine ship cut off: then abruptly, as at a signal, a roar from the quay, shouting and quarreling and jabbering from men who in an instant over ran the already crowded ship and kept running through it. And it was clear that here … the East began: in this chaos of uneconomical movement of self stimulated din, the sudden feeling of insecurity, the conviction that men were not brothers and that luggage was in danger. (13)

Naipaul while expressing his views about India seems to be caught within two parts. One is the childhood imagination or fantasy, which came from the reminisce of his grandparents and
father and on the other hand, his actual encounter with India, that happens in his adulthood. At the age of fifteen, while studying in Trinidad high school, he sketches the map of India in his memory. But after Indian independence i.e. after his actual encounter with the land, his interest in ancestral home land diminishes. Perhaps, what separates Naipaul from India is not the language barrier only, but also a snobbish attitude towards popular Indian movies and Indian attitudes. Above all it is “Hinduism that he finds disquieting” (An Area of Darkness, 44).

After the travelogues we had a semi autobiographical book from Naipaul, called *The Enigma of Arrival* published in 1987. Here Naipaul depicts as a writer of Caribbean origin, who finds joy of home coming to England after wandering years during which the world stopped being a colony for him. Central theme of Naipaul’s work are after the damaging effects of colonialism upon the people of the Third world. In this respect he had been always compared with Joseph Conrad, because of the similar pessimistic portrayal of human nature and themes of exile and alienation.

During 1990’s Naipaul concentrated himself, on writing non-fiction. In 1994 appeared his long awaited novel *A way in the world*. It is an autobiography and a fictional history of colonialism, presenting stories from the times of Sir Walter Raleigh to the nineteenth century revolutionary Francisco Miranda. In 1889, inspired by the American journey, he brought out *A turn in the south* (1989). It is a book dedicated to his father, a renowned homage to him. In this book he explain an exquisitely painful subject: race relations in the Southern United States.

Africa, to her family estate. Willie finds problems to come in terms with himself, as a son of a Brahmin, who has married an untouchable. His father is a rebel, who ends at the monastery. Willie rebels against his own background and the wishes of his father. Unknowingly he has many things common with his father that he seldom admits. His wife had come from a country where the colonial system was breaking down. Willie is an outsider to that country. After struggling with himself, his community, his bringing up his father’s wishes, and his wife’s country and her circumstances, he decides to leave her after eighteen years and finds his true identity. Thus Willie lives half a life, a shadow life, and his existential search continues, in the story.

Naipaul was quite friendly with American writer Paul Theroux. But later their friendship crumbled with a wave of misunderstanding. As Theroux records about their friendship and departure in his book Sir Vidya’s Shadow (1998). Targeting towards Naipaul, he expresses that he later on came to know that Naipaul was monomaniac in print as well as in person.


V.S. Naipaul is adorned with many honours and prizes. He was knighted in 1989. He holds honorary doctorate from Cambridge University and Columbia University in New York, and honorary degree from the University of Cambridge, London and Oxford. The prizes and honours received by V.S. Naipaul in chronological order is as follows:

Prizes and Awards:

1958 Mail on Sunday / John Llewellyn Rhys Prize for The Mystic Masseur
1961  Somerset Maugham Award *Miguel Street*

1964  Hawthornden Prize *Mr Stone and The Knights Companion*

1968  WH Smith Literary Award *The Mimic Men*

1971  Booker Prize for Fiction *In a Free State*

1993  David Cohen British Literature Prize

2001  Nobel Prize for literature

2009  Man Booker International Prize (Shortlist)

This literary man, truly dedicated to literature, even did not want to be disturbed when he was being intimated about his Nobel honour, by the committee member at home, as he was involved in writing. During the award ceremony of the most prestigious honour, that can be the dream of a writer in his lifetime, Naipaul spoke as expressed his views as such: Everything 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. (29)

Naipaul’s award was long awaited, because this man of letter has a 50 years of long literary journey, in which he wrote from fiction to travelogues, autobiography to history. Though recognized for his work, but the saddest part of his life, that gets echoed in his work is a search for home. In *A Bend of River*, he writes “home was hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost” (170). Thus Naipaul wrote constantly about homelessness.

He from early age, nurtured a dream of becoming a writer, but it was not easy for him to make his voice heard and accept in the unfathomable world of English literature. His father was a constant source of inspiration for him. After writing few novels, he felt that this style of writing was not an adequate vehicle of expression, hence he turned towards travelogues. Thus he chose a method of expressing personal life stories, webbed from his travel notes. Thus
through his travelogues, he explores the different culture of the lands visited by him. He also writes their impacts and guides them sometimes as an outsider, and sometimes with his views about the place. Thus multiculturalism echoes throughout his travel works, which will be elaborated in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Naipaul perfectly deserves the accolades that he had received, being one of the most desirable prose writers of the twentieth century. On the other hand he had also received many insensitive commentaries and comments for his straightforwardness and views. But he had always tried to restrain all such attempts or get biased, disturbed by it, as it may affect his intellectual freedom. He has been attacked with adverse critical comments by his fellow literary men Naipaul, as his attitude, always remained unmoved, by such unpalatable reactions, because he is fearless in truth telling. It may also be noted that his initial travel writings were harsh, but the later ones were more sympathetic in tone. Yet Naipaul remains one of the most widely read and admired literary figures of the contemporary world. As Joseph Epstein puts about Naipaul. “This man the grandson of an indentured labourer, the son of an unsuccessful island journalist, is far and away the most talented, the most truthful and the most honourable writer of his generation.” (15)
Works Cited


Stammwitz, Kate, Interview with Pico lyer; *Turning the Telescope in Other Direction*, 13 Nov, 1997. Print.