



## **AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE VISUALIZATION AND VERACITY OF INDIA FROM THE REVELATION OF V. S. NAIPAUL**

Devi Bhushan

Department of English

G. N. Khalsa College

Karnal, Haryana, India

### **Abstract**

For forty years V. S. Naipaul has been traveling and through his writing, creating some of the most wide-ranging and sustained meditations on our world. With an abiding faith in the redemptive power of modernity balanced by a sense of wonder about the past, Naipaul has explored an astonishing variety of societies and peoples through the many-sided prism of his own experience. Whether writing about the Muslim invasions of India, Mobutu's mad reign in Zaire, or the New York mayoral elections, he has demonstrated again and again that no one has a shrewder intuition of the ways in which power works, of the universal relation of the exploiter and the exploited. And no one has put forth a more consistently eloquent defense of the dignity of the individual and the value of civilization. While some of his travelogues date back to the early 1960s, they nonetheless seem fresh, speaking to Naipaul's astute and prescient powers of observation. He uncovers the universal in his subjects: the confrontation between East and West, the tension between old and new, between creators and consumers, the nature of power. It is in light of this and his spot light on India and Trinidad that this research paper has been prepared. "Out of its squalor and human decay, its eruptions of butchery, India produced so many people of grace and beauty, ruled by elaborate courtesy. Producing too much life, it denied the value of life; yet it permitted a unique human development to so many. Nowhere



were people so heightened, rounded and individualistic; nowhere did they offer themselves so fully and with such assurance. To know Indians was to take a delight in people as people; every encounter was an adventure. I did not want India to sink [out of my memory]; the mere thought was painful.” : V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness*. The introduction covers the life of Sir V.S Naipaul: his works, identity, style, career, marriage and a review of his famous literature. The first chapter is an attempt at analyzing the western influence on the Indian Culture. Chapter three expounds on the social conflict and ideologies of colonial Hindu in both India and Trinidad. Chapter four is an analysis of Sir V.S Naipaul’s works in the search for his identity with the conclusion giving a summary of the analysis. While this is only an analysis of his most prolific works concerning India and Trinidad, It by no means exhausts the densely researched writer, some of whose meditations are more accessible than others, which may, at times, hinder demystification of the man many consider to be the greatest living writer in the English language.

## INTRODUCTION

Generally considered the leading novelist of the English-speaking Caribbean, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature 2001, Naipaul's writings deals 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 postcolonial world. Naipaul has also arisen much controversy because of his politically incorrect views of the "half-made societies." He has constantly refused to avoid unwelcome topics, characterizing his role as a writer "to look and to look again, to re-look and rethink."

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born in a small town in Trinidad into a family of Indian Brahmin origin. His father, Seepersad Naipaul, was a correspondent for the Trinidad Guardian. He also published short stories. When Naipaul was six the family moved to Port of Spain, the capital. Seepersad 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 aspirations, telling him in a letter: "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.'"

At the age of 18 he had written his first novel which was rejected by the publisher. Naipaul was educated at Queen's Royal College, Port of Spain, and in 1950 he won a scholarship to Oxford. In 1949, after having some pictures of himself taken for his application to the university, Naipaul 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." After a nervous breakdown he tried to commit suicide, but luckily the gas meter ran out. While at Oxford he met Patricia Hale; they married in 1955. She died in 1996 from cancer and Naipaul married Nadira Khannum Alvi, a divorced Pakistani journalist. On 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-1950s, when he started to examine his own Trinidadian background. From 1954 to 1956, Naipaul was a broadcaster for the BBC's Caribbean Voices, and between the years 1957 and 1961 he was a regular fiction reviewer for the New Statesman.

V.S. Naipaul, as a descendant of relatively recent immigrants from India of course had a notion, re-enforced by the exclusivity of the Indian community of farm laborers, with their rituals of Hinduism, of distinctiveness as Brahmins whom circumstances had forced to do unbrahminic jobs below their dignity. This complex situation provides V.S. Naipaul, and provided his equally gifted late brother Shiva Naipaul, and his nephew Bisoondath, the setting for their creative energies, as it earlier provided Naipaul's father. Because of the racial compartmentalization of the Caribbean required by the logic of both slavery and colonization, earlier West Indian writers tended to write basically about their communities, and the outsiders only as caricatures or



figures of fun. Naipaul admits that his contacts with members of other races were minimal and that he met people who were outside his ethnic group only in official contexts where necessity dictated so, like in schools.

Thus, although Naipaul mentions his mulatto teacher of English literature in one of his recent long essays entitled Reading and Writing where he discusses seminal influences in his early writing career, there appears to have been minimum contacts with people of other races. Familiarity with other groups is only at a distance. Among the immigrant Indians were some of Islamic background, of both Sunni and Shia persuasion .At the age of eighteen Naipaul won a scholarship to University College, Oxford, to study English. In a characteristic acerbic style he described his period there as a complete waste of time, spent reading texts that did not contribute anything to his desire to become a writer, an ambition that was assiduously encouraged by his father. Earning a scholarship was for Naipaul an escape route from the constraining limitations of an island life. Apart from the father's improvidence, unhelpful relatives, the constant anxiety of living in unstable homes, and ultimately the consciousness of having a talent were to provide the backdrop to Naipaul's neurosis about what he described as 'half-made societies'.

V.S. Naipaul's oeuvre consists of essays, travel writing and his work of fiction. These genres have each attracted a particular audience, although those who read his essays are likely to also to have read his travel writing. His essays have eminently appeared mostly in The New York Review of Books. His readers can be classified into three broad categories, his aficionados who read all his writing, both fiction and non- fiction, mostly Westerners with a strong reading culture whose views about non- Western societies find validation in his works; Third world intellectuals, forced by their vocation to follow the writings of this important writer, and general readers whose reading is rather selective and who might have a vested interest in what Naipaul has to say either about their societies or beliefs.



In the past two decades he has found notoriety among Muslims, both those who read his works and those who know him only by reputation, as a writer of biased books against Muslims and Muslim societies. Because he suffers no fools, he has managed to alienate everyone at one time or another in the course of his productive career. He has antagonized Indians and Pakistanis, Africans, West Indians, and the British, not to mention fellow writers and his editors. He does not appear to be an easy person to live with. The most damaging indictment of his character and hubris remains the unkindly book by an ex-friend of his and fellow writer, the American novelist and travel writer Paul Theroux, in his *In Sir Vidia's Shadow*. The book, written in serious vein, is both entertaining and revealing. Naipaul also makes an unwanted appearance in Diana Athill's publishing memoir, *Stet*, published by Granta Books, when she was his editor. It is an unflattering portrait of Naipaul as a snob, an insufferable bore and a tiresome Albatross on her neck .

Virtually each of Naipaul's books is unique in the sense of developing a distinct style for each one of them. This alone makes him stand out as a master stylist and literary technician. He has assiduously sought to maintain a distinctive style for each of his books in each of the sub genres that he has worked in. Like all writers who have produced books with any consistency, Naipaul's works reflect his personal emotional and intellectual development, from the impassioned and youthful observations of his ancestral home, India, in *An Area of Darkness*, to the recent fiction, *Half A Life*. His oeuvre can be periodized into the works of the mid-sixties, the seventies, the eighties and the nineties.

### **70's, 80's, 90's AND THE SEARCH FOR THE MUSLIM AND THE BLACK MINORITIES**

The most remarkable event of the seventies was undoubtedly the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini became the new bogymen. The flight of the Shah of Iran to the United States and later to Egypt where he later died and the taking of hostage the American diplomats, against all diplomatic norms and conventions and of course the loss of Iran as an important ally and source of oil created an unprecedented anti-Islamic hysteria in the West.



Suddenly Islam became the new object of curiosity, fascination and ultimately fears. Naipaul, as an experienced third world felt compelled to try and understand the new 'menace' and off he set off to the predominantly Muslim countries of Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia to try and unravel the mystery of Islam to the West. The five month journey culminated in the An Islamic Journey, which was instantly hailed as an important book on Islam.

As noted earlier, the distinguishing style of Naipaul in his travel books is his ability to create new stylistic forms for each of them. Naipaul has admitted in his Nobel lecture that he deals in words, emotions and ideas. This, I believe, is an important key to understanding his work. In the seventies he wrote both fiction and nonfiction. He uses words for his fiction to create characters that are believable, while in his travel books and essays he reserves his emotions for those he despises. No wonder that there is a happy balance of emotions and ideas in his travel works and essays. Most of what he says in these two genres is visceral. Characteristically he does not mince words. In their emotional content and hyperbole, An Islamic Journey is curiously close to The Middle Passage. In both he pours scorn on the Muslims and blacks alike. Akash Kapur captures Naipaul's islamophobia and tries to find its causes. Kapur notes:

Naipaul's excoriation of everything Islamic in his new book firmly fixes his location on the map of contemporary Asian politics. The book's thesis, stated in crystal clear prose at the outset and hammered home in subsequent chapters, is that 'Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's world view alters. His idea of history alters. The disturbance for societies is immense, and even after a thousand years can remain unresolved.' It isn't hard to read between the lines: what Islam did in India, it has done throughout Asia. Indeed, Naipaul's dislike for the Islam he encounters in the "converted" countries is on several occasions contrasted with his enthusiasm for an elemental India. His most scathing criticisms, for example, are reserved for Pakistan – alternately a state in "ruin," a "criminal enterprise," and a "cultural desert."



Likewise, in Indonesia, his hostility toward the Islamic present often reads like an elegy for that nation's lost Hindu past. "Islam has moved on here," he writes, "to this part of greater India, after its devastation of India proper, turning the religious-cultural light of the subcontinent, so far as this region was concerned, into the light of a dead star." Significantly, in Iran, where Naipaul has no Hindu axe to grind, he can sound a softer note, comparing the atmosphere in the University town of Qum to the colleges of Oxford. (In *Among the Believers*, his earlier book on Islam, Naipaul found evidence in Qum of the "medieval Muslim world, the great universal civilization of the time.") All ideologies, whether social, political, economic or religious, are in essence totalizing in their demands from their adherents. They are essentially exclusionist as much as they are inflexible in what they demand of their followers. This is certainly not unique to Islam. It is equally true of fascism, capitalism, and socialism, Hinduism or Zionism. It will also come as news to V.S Naipaul that the earliest follower of Muhammad, though Arabs were also considered as converts, converts to a new weltanschauung .

Perhaps no one has put Naipaul's obsession with Islam and Muslims in a better context than Edward W. Said. In an earlier review of *An Islamic Journey*, Said observed that: "Unrestrained by genuine learning or self-education, this persona – Naipaul the novelist – tours the vulnerable parts of his natal provenance, the colonial world he has been telling us about via his acquired British identity. But the places he visits are carefully chosen, they are absolutely safe, places that no one in the liberal culture that has made him its darling will speak up for. Everyone knows Islam is a "place" you must criticize. Time did it, Newsweek did it, the Guardian and the New York Times did it .Naipaul wouldn't make a trip to Israel, for example, which is not to say that he wouldn't find rabbinical laws governing daily behavior any less repressive than Khomeini's. No: his audience knows Israel is OK, "Islam" not. If it is criticism that the West stands for, good – we want Naipaul to criticize those mad mullahs, vacant Islamic students, cliché-ridden revolutionaries. But does he write for and to them? Does he live among them, risk their direct retaliation? No dialogue. He snipes at them from the Atlantic Monthly where none of them can ever get back at him ."



This obsession with Muslims, given the current hysteria in the West, puts Naipaul in the same league as those who are increasingly seen to have throw objectivity out the window when writing on or about Islam and Muslims. He now reads more like a literary Daniel Pipes than a celebrated novelist and travel writer. This is disturbing for a writer who has often been described as one of the finest writers in the English language.

### **NAIPAUL'S WRITINGS**

The works of the Caribbean author V. S. Naipaul, winner of the 2001 Literature Nobel Prize, consist mostly of novels, but he also writes novellas and short stories. Half of his published work nonetheless is reputedly non-fiction, in the form of essays, historical accounts and travel books. Naipaul's works – regardless of their being labeled as fiction or non-fiction – deal with the difficulty of the former colonies' peoples to build a communal identity and to pull themselves out of poverty (both physical and cultural); with the paradoxes of underdevelopment, with characters who live half-lives, in the painful awareness – or gaining awareness – of their troubled societies, their pathetic mimicry of European behaviors; a sense of homelessness in the world and the difficult process of finding one's stand in the economical and technological modernity. The critical industry that Naipaul's works have sprung has taken on an aspect similar to his own agenda and themes. The bulk of this criticism is done in the realm of postcolonial theories, with a focus on political rather than literary or textual issues.

Although Naipaul's non-fictional texts appear to observe the discursive conventions of history, they contain elements of fiction. Some passages are pure inventions, based, however, on what documents suggest. On the other way round, his fictional texts are fully embedded in historical material. The selection, ordering, plotting, character and setting description techniques in Naipaul's supposedly historical and fictional accounts often render vain those works' labels "fiction" or "non-fiction". The close-knit interconnectedness and blurring of documented historical research and fiction is present in his Indian Trilogy , as well as in the travel writing pieces





Among the Believers (1981), Beyond Belief (1998), A Turn in the South (1989) and other texts. The constructed nature of historical narrative works is similar to the constructed narrative of the fiction writing. The Loss of El Dorado (1969), his book dealing most specifically with historical events in Trinidad Tobago, is an example of this fusion. A Way in the World (1994), subtitled "a novel", comprises a mixed assortment of nine narratives including fiction, history, and autobiography and imagined versions of actual lives. The stories are set in Trinidad, South America, Africa and England. Some characters are composite versions of writers and political activists.

The narrator of the interlinked short stories of Miguel Street (1959) is a boy who grows up, starts to earn his own money and finally goes abroad to study. This panoramic portrayal of Port of Spain, the first book he wrote (but the third published), displays a colorful array of interlinked characters which includes Bogart, who got his name from the film Casablanca, B. Wordsworth, who sells his poems for a few cents, and Man-man, who is a mystery to the people of the street. The inter-textual nature of character's names is a strategy in this first piece of writing that will recur in HL and MS.

Naipaul's travel writing began when, ten years after he had left Trinidad, he went back there on a three-month fellowship in order to write an account of the Caribbean islands, which resulted in The Middle Passage (1962). Since then he has not stopped traveling to and writing about Africa, the Muslim countries, East Asia, South America, the U.S. and, repeatedly, India. His early novels are set in Trinidad and several others in Africa, among which A Bend in the River (1979). This novel is basically about the corruptibility of mankind. The story is set in a fictional country fashioned after Zaire or Uganda. Salim, the narrator, is an Indian Muslim trader whose family has lived in Africa for many generations. Salim sets up a shop in a town on the bend of the river and attains some success, but is doomed to fail in the oppressive environment of the decolonization aftermath.



Again Naipaul's protagonist is an outsider, who realizes that his style of life is at its end and that he must give it up to survive. Recurrent themes in Naipaul's works are the damaging effects of colonialism, added to skepticism about the imported ideas of revolutionaries or the possibility of the former colonies to avoid mistakes made by the Western societies. In this regard, he has been compared to Joseph Conrad due to similar pessimistic portrayal of human nature and the themes of alienation and exile. In the essay "Conrad's Darkness and Mine" Naipaul sees his own background as one of the Conradian dark places of the earth, and says that it came to me that the great novelists wrote about highly organized societies. I had no such society; I couldn't share the assumptions of the writers; I didn't see my world reflected in theirs. My colonial world was more mixed and secondhand, and more restricted. The time came when I began to ponder the mystery – Conradian word – of my own background: that island in the mouth of a great South American river, the Orinoco, one of the Conradian dark places of the earth (p.168). In this essay, Naipaul comments at length about the impact of Conrad on his sensibility and the influence on his own writing: And I found that Conrad – sixty years before me had been everywhere before me. Not as a man with a cause, but a man offering, as in *Nostromo*, a vision of the world's half-made societies as places which continuously made and unmade them, where there was no goal (p.170).

The travel writing pieces *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981) and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted People* (1998) are portraits of his journeys to the non-Arab Islamic countries of Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, and Malaysia, in which the author tries to understand the fundamentalist fervor and ideological rage that have marked the Western image of the region. In *An Area of Darkness* (1964) Naipaul's childhood idealized view of the wholeness of Indian culture was dispelled by his first visit to the country, reported in the first book of the Indian Trilogy. The second book, *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977) describes the region injured by both the British Raj and the preceding Islamic invaders. The third book, *India: a Million Mutinies Now* (1990) is a reappraisal of his first visits to the country and offers a more optimistic view. Yet, Naipaul was accused of substituting bitter negativity for a nostalgic turn to a



revival of Hindu's traditional culture. Naipaul's first novel, *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), gives an ironic picture of naïve authorship. This is the story of Ganesh, a poor and shrewd young man with writing ambitions. To the people of the Trinidadian community, becoming a writer is a far-fetched accomplishment. Ganesh may have only a hazy notion of what authorship really is, but in rural Trinidad that puts him several steps ahead of the rest of the community. The "books" Ganesh writes are not creative at all; in fact they become part of the holy-man scam – hence the title *The Mystic Masseur*. Yet those books form a platform from which the protagonist rises to wealth and a certain measure of political power. Ponderings about the act of writing have been since then one of Naipaul's recurrent themes, and are also present in *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*.

*The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), a book set largely in the English countryside, is a painful reflection on the issues of home and exile. The subtitle of the book calls it a novel, but it cannot be easily categorized. Naipaul has consistently blurred the boundaries of genres; travel, autobiography, narrative, reflection and history often get pasted in a hybrid genre, which he has used repeatedly and has become one of the hallmarks of postmodernist literature. *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963), by the way, is the only novel in which plot is wholly set in England, as well as the only one in which all the characters are English. Naipaul's 1971 Booker Prize winner *In a Free State* comprises two short stories, the novella that lends its name to the book as well as prologue and epilogue which describe impressions from his travel journal.

The common thread that connects it all is the search for the reasons why destructive impulses rise to the surface. The narration in "One out of many" begins long before the Indian immigrant Santosh arrives in the U. S. covering his background, and the decision to leave his country. Santosh, a poorly educated servant to a diplomat, intends to escape the poverty in India. However, Santosh's journey not only shatters his received views of "the land of opportunity" but also raises irresolvable issues about cultural identity. Santosh, ignorant of American ways, learns about the United States, befriending a black woman, experiencing the Washington race



riots, and growing alienated from the new world he thought he could embrace. As in the other narrations, remarkably in HL and MS, this work presents to the reader the dilemma of cross-culture assimilation.

Among the novels, the titles *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), *The Mimic Men* (1967) and *A Bend in the River* (1979) rank as the most outstanding achievements in Naipaul's career. In *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), often regarded as Naipaul's masterpiece, the main character's longing for a house of his own provides the backbone of the novel. It creates its own intricate universe, portraying the daily life of Hindi Trinidadians in realistic details, naming every object, creating numerous characters with humor and compassion. The house is the leading symbol for everything Mr. Biswas lacks: a solid basis for his existence, a sense of individuality and security in a destitute environment. Although in other novels the house symbolism may not be that central, the depiction of homes – rented rooms, apartments, houses – is very important to set the tone of the narrative and establish characters' personalities and perception of the world. His two latest novels, HL and MS confirm that housing depiction pervades Naipaul's writing at every level and plays a central role in his literature.

In *The Mimic Men* (1967) the "Roman house" not only is the physical setting of the main character's troubled political actions, but it cannot be dissociated from his conscious questioning of those actions. Furthermore, the "Roman house" underlies the protagonist's reflections about his private life, his marriage and process of divorce. The "Roman house" also helps to establish the design of the novel, as it contrasts with the backward London hotel from where the narrator tells his story in flashback, and with the houses of his childhood. House descriptions are recurrent in Naipaul's fiction and it is not surprising that he goes back to them when speaking about his background and its influence in his work in the Nobel Lecture<sup>10</sup> (2001):

My grandmother's house in Chaguanas was in two parts. The front part, of bricks and plaster, was painted white. It was like a kind of Indian house, with a grand balustrade terrace on the



upper floor, and a prayer room on the floor above that. It was ambitious in its decorative detail, with lotus capitals on pillars, and sculptures of Hindu deities, all done by people working only from a memory of things in India. In Trinidad it was an architectural oddity. At the back of this house, and joined to it by an upper bridge room, was a timber building in the French Caribbean style. The entrance gate was at the side, between the two houses. It was a tall gate of corrugated iron on a wooden frame . The above citation leads us to a cursory account of the author's biographical data. Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born in 1932, in Chaguanas, a small destitute town in Trinidad, into a family of Indian Brahmin origin. His grandparents were from Uttar Pradesh in north India, who went to the West Indies as indentured workers for the sugar cane plantations established on the island.

The Hindu ancestry, along with the patchwork of nonintegrated ethnic groups in Trinidad and the social plight of the newly independent country was to have a lasting influence on his writing. The melting pot of diverging traditions in Trinidad, with a composite and impoverished population consisting of remains of the layers of colonizers – from the Spanish to the British, through Portuguese, Dutch, French, added to imported peoples from Africa, China and India, taken there either as slaves or indenture workers – all living under the hazy cultural dominance of the British, and, after World War II, the Americans, was the material of his first writings. The geopolitical isolation of Trinidad – and by extension of all the West Indies as well as other neglected regions of the world – was to become an obsessive theme. On occasion of his Nobel Lecture (2001), Naipaul so describes the problematic standing of Trinidad: My background is at once exceedingly simple and exceedingly confused. I was born in Trinidad. It is a small island in the mouth of the great Orinoco river of Venezuela. So Trinidad is not strictly of South America, and not strictly of the Caribbean. It was developed as a New World plantation colony, and when I was born in 1932 it had a population of about 400,000. Of this, about 150,000 were Indians, Hindus and Muslims, nearly all of peasant origin, and nearly all from the Gangetic plain .



His father, Seepersad Naipaul, was a correspondent for the Trinidad Guardian, who also tried his hand as a short story writer, and encouraged the son in his writing ambition. When Naipaul was six, the family moved to Port of Spain, the capital, where he attended Queen's Royal College in secondary school. In 1950 he won a highly sought-after scholarship to Oxford, where a nervous breakdown led him to a failed attempt at suicide. While at Oxford he met Patricia Hale, and they married in 1955. A widower in 1966, Naipaul married Nadira Alvi, a divorced Pakistani journalist. On graduation Naipaul started his career as a freelance writer. During this period Naipaul witnessed the Noting Hill bohemian literary scene, and dwelled among the first wave of immigrants from the former British Empire. This scene is reworked in the London chapters of *Half a Life*, as it is elsewhere in his works, especially in *The Mimic Men* (1967). He found his voice as a writer in the mid-fifties, when he started to examine and use materials from his own Trinidadian background. From 1954 to 1956 Naipaul was a broadcaster for the BBC Caribbean Voices, and between the years 1957 and 1961 he was a regular fiction reviewer for the *New Statesman*. He traveled extensively as journalist writer and lived in Africa and India for periods of time, though his official address is in the Wiltshire setting of *The Enigma of Arrival*.

Naipaul published his first books in the late 1950s, but they did not make much money for him or his publisher, André Deutsch Limited. However, he knew his value as a writer and refused to write a review for *The Times Literary Supplement* for their usual fee. Naipaul's novel "**The mystic masseur (1957)**," about a bright young man, who dreams of becoming a famous writer, was adapted for the screen by Ismail Merchant.

"**Miguel Street (1959)**" was a farewell to Port of Spain, Trinidad. The colorful characters of the sketches include Bogart, who got his name from the film *Casablanca*, B. Wordsworth who sells his poetry for four cents, and Man-man who in a real mystery to the people of Miguel Street. The narrator is a boy who grows up, starts to earn his own money and finally goes abroad to study. "I left them all and walked briskly towards the airplane, not looking back, looking only at my shadow before me, a dancing dwarf on the tarmac." In later works Naipaul gave up comedic



tones but in 1960 Charles Poore could write in his review of the book: "A comparison with "Porgy and Bess" has been suggested. The parallel has at least the merit of reminding us that the whole world is one. In that hospitable mood we might also remember Mark Twain's tales of life on the Mississippi. But Miguel Street, in Trinidad, is not really very much like Catfish Row, nor is reminders of nineteenth-century Missouri prevalent. What is true and, if you will, significant about Mr. Naipaul's book is that it presents a world of its own excellently." (The New York Times, May 5, 1960)

“**A house for Mr. biswas (1961)**” is often regarded as Naipaul's masterpiece. It tells the tragicomic story of the search for independence and identity of a Brahmin Indian living in Trinidad. The protagonist, Mohun Biswas, was partly modeled after the author's father. Naipaul has said about this character and his father: "My father was a profounder man in every way. And his wounds are deeper than the other man can say. It's based on him, but it couldn't be the real man." 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, which fuses social comedy and pathos, follows his struggle in variety of jobs, from sign painter to journalist, to his final triumph. Later Naipaul returned to his father in “**Between father and son (1999)**”, a record of their correspondence in the early 1950s .

In 1961, Naipaul received a grant from the Trinidad government to travel in the Caribbean. His first non-fiction book was “**The middle passage (1962)**,” in which he described his first revisiting of the West Indies. Its examination of racial tensions made black West Indians call Naipaul a 'racist.' From the wide period of travels in the 1960s and early 1970s in India, South-America, Africa, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and the USA, Naipaul produced among others “**India: a wounded civilization (1977)**,” and “**A bend in the river (1979)**,” a pessimistic novel about Africa, proclaiming the corruptibility of mankind. The story is set in a country very like Zaire or Uganda. Salim, the narrator is a Muslim, whose family, Indian traders, has lived in Africa hundreds of years. Salim sets up a shop in a town on the bend of the river and gains success,



which has no future in a country ruled by the Big Man, president for life. Again Naipaul's protagonist is an outsider, who realizes that his way of life is almost at its end and eventually he must give up everything. "The bush runs itself. But there is no place to go," says Selim's friend Ferdinand, when he rescues Selim from a jail. "The bush" is Naipaul metaphor for the country and the whole third world. "Africa has no culture," Naipaul has said. Derek Walcott, the West Indian poet who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1992, noted: "If Naipaul's attitude toward Negroes, with its nasty little sneers was turned on Jews, for example, how many people would praise him for his frankness?"

Since the 1950s, Naipaul has lived in Britain, but traveled extensively. His essays and travel writings are often negative, unsentimental explorations of West Indian society as in "**The middle passage (1962)**". "The steel band used to be regarded as a high manifestation of West Indian culture, but it was a sound I detested." **Among the believers: an Islamic journey (1981)** was accused by Muslim readers of narrow and selective vision of Islam. Naipaul searches the sources of the new Islam – and the ideological rage. "Islam sanctified rage – rage about the faith, political rage: one could be like the other. And more than once on this journey I had met sensitive men who were ready to contemplate great convulsions." (In *Among the Believers*) Naipaul's latest travel books include "**beyond belief: Islamic excursions among the converted peoples (1998)**," intimate portraits from his journeys to the non-Arab Islamic countries of Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, and Malaysia. Naipaul tries to understand the fundamentalist fervor that has marked the Western image of the region. "There probably has been no imperialism like that of Islam and the Arabs," he writes. In Iran he meets war veterans, who express their disillusionment and their sense of being manipulated by the mullahs, and in Indonesia he meets his former friend, who opposed the Suharto regime, and later became an establishment figure, an advocate of an Islamist future. On his first visit to India since he was awarded the Nobel Prize, Naipaul said: "We are not here to celebrate the antiquity of literature in India, but to celebrate modern writing."





In his semi-autobiographical novel “**The enigma of arrival (1987)**” Naipaul depicts a writer of Caribbean origin, who finds joys of homecoming in England after wandering years – during which world stopped being a colony for him. Central themes in Naipaul's works are damaging effects of colonialism upon the people of the Third World, but he doesn't believe in the imported ideas of revolutionaries or the ability of the former colonies to avoid mistakes made by the Western consumer societies. As a writer he has been compared to Joseph Conrad because of similar pessimistic portrayal of human nature and the themes of exile and alienation. "Barbarism in India is very powerful because it has a religious side," he once stated. In the essay 'Conrad's Darkness' “**(In the return of eva peron, 1980)**” Naipaul sees his own background as "one of the Conradian dark places of the earth."

In the 1990s, Naipaul concentrated on non-fiction. His long-awaited novel, “**A way in the world (1994)**,” was 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 “**half a life (2001)**” the protagonist is Willie Somerset Chandran, born in India in the 1930s. His second name he has got from the English writer Somerset Maugham, who has met his father. Willie moves to London, drifts in bohemian circles, publishes a book, marries Ana, a woman of mixed African descent, and moves with her to Africa, to her family estate. Willie has problems to come in terms with himself, as the son of a Brahman, who has married an "untouchable." His father is a rebel who ends at a monastery . Willie rebels against his own background and the wishes of his father, with whom he has more in common than he admits. In his wife's home country, in which colonial system is breaking down, Willie is also an outsider. After eighteen years he decides to leave her, and find his true identity. He has lived half a life, a shadow life, but Naipaul doesn't tell will happen to him. Willie's existential search continues and the rest of his story is left open.

Willie's decision parallels with the history of the relationship between the American writer Paul Theroux and Naipaul. Theroux depicted his decade's long friendship with Naipaul in Sir Vidia's



Shadow (1998). In this angry and unforgiving book Theroux eventually is rejected by Naipaul and he realizes he has come out Naipaul's shadow, he is free. Theroux considered earlier the older writer as his mentor but the friendship ended in breakup, which Theroux sealed with his bitter accusations. "I had admired his talent. After a while I admired nothing else. Finally I began to wonder about his talent, seriously to wonder, and doubted it when I found myself skipping pages in his more recent books. In the past I would have said the fault was mine. Now I knew that he could be the monomaniac in print that he was in person." (In Sir Vidia's Shadow)

Besides the Nobel Prize, Naipaul's several literary awards include the Booker Prize for "**In a free state (1971)**". He was knighted in 1989 and in 1993 he won the first David Cohen British Literature Prize for "lifetime achievement by a living British writer". Naipaul's manuscripts and extensive archives have been deposited in the University of Tulsa. At a speech in October 2004 Naipaul announced that "**Magic seeds (2004)**", the sequel to Half a Life, may be his last novel. "I have no faith in the survival of the novel," he said. "**The masque of Africa (2010)**", a self-searching journey to "the beginning of things", was Naipaul's 16th volume of nonfiction

Naipaul's ability to stir up public debate is widely recognized. In 2011 he said in an interview at the Royal Geographic Society: "I read a piece of writing and within a paragraph or two I know whether it is by a woman or not. I think [it is] unequal to me." Naipaul criticized female writers for "sentimentality" and "narrow view of the world". As a response, the New Zealand novelist Keri Hulme called Naipaul "a misogynist prick whose works are dying".

## Conclusion

It is necessary to remark that the ideas mentioned in An Area of Darkness form the concept for Naipaul's further works India: A Wounded Civilization and India: A Million Mutinies Now. The author deals with the same ideologies in all three books, but with different attitudes, which are shaped through his own experience. There is a certain progress in formulating his ideas and the



author's perspectives change with every single book. Relatively broad period of time, when the trilogy was written, suggests its diversity in style and sentiments. The author's disillusion is the principal idea unifying the trilogy. Yet it is obvious that the initial disillusion that Naipaul feels when he first comes to India modifies into certain reconciliation with the country of his ancestors as well as with his self. He finally comes to terms with India and concurrently with his own deteriorated identity. India has always been a place of many different tendencies and ambiguities for Naipaul.

He both feels the strong bonds with this country and tries to untie himself at the same time. The confusion he feels when he first comes to India substantially affects his apprehension of the country. But the inceptive bewilderment changes into sympathy and better understanding of his ancestral country.

It is this emotional aspect that differentiates Naipaul's travel books from typical travelogues. The author projects himself to his narration and the attitudes toward India can be considered as solely his own response to the country. As was already stated, he reveals not only Indian situation but his own personality as well. This is perhaps why the interpretations of this trilogy vary in certain aspects. They agree on the central idea of Naipaul's disillusion and alienation, nonetheless, they differ in the extent.

Naipaul's deepest hopelessness and despair manifest in *An Area of Darkness*. He cannot cope with the reality that he has to face being for the first time in the land of his forefathers. The real India fails to fulfill Naipaul's expectations. He is absolutely disgusted by the appalling conditions in India. It is the country of dirt and dust. In *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul is even more severe in his descriptions, because they are freed from emotions. It is more analytical and objective. He stays focused on the same topics as in the first book. Although his narration is full of stern indictments, in the end, he reveals a sense of hope and believes in Indian ability to



transform their country. India: A Million Mutinies Now is the last and the most positive volume of the trilogy.

It is written in the form of interviews. Naipaul provides the reader with the description of India through real experience of Indian people. He tries to avoid his commentaries, though sometimes necessary, and show a varicolored picture of India. The living conditions of people largely improved, the agriculture and industry increased their production. The traditional caste system and Hindu traditions are slowly but surely losing their power. India is finally “moving ahead”.

To sum it all up, V. S. Naipaul characterizes India in the time of its uncertainties after a long successful struggle for independence, in its oscillating, explosive time of the Emergency, and finally comes to awakening of the nation. He faces an auspicious future of the prosperous country with hope and appeasement. The Indian trilogy exquisitely and richly paints the Indian journey through darkness, caused by the death of the old wounded civilization and through million mutinies resulting in the birth of a new nation.

Overall, the results of our study both confirm and expand the findings from cross-cultural research comparing Western and Asian cultures. In these studies it has been shown that individuals from Western and Asian cultural contexts were differentially sensitive to self-interest as well as to moral obligations and interpersonal responsibilities. In order to disentangle possible effects of culture and development that have received little attention previously, cultural differences were pursued in a developmental framework. This implied including different age groups from childhood to adolescence (7-, 9-, 12-, and 15-year-olds) as well as introducing meaningful contexts of development, such as close friendship and parent–child relationship. The results of the study bear out the necessity to take these factors into account when explaining the development of socio-moral understanding. The findings for the Icelandic participants are consistent with Western socialization theories that postulate a predominantly self-centered motivation for younger children.



Moral knowledge is seen as external to the self and thus moral motivation may lag behind moral knowledge (Nunner-Winkler, 1993; Nunner-Winkler & Sodian, 1988). Only with the development of a moral self is moral consistency established (Blasi, 1983; Keller & Edelstein, 1990). The idea of increasing internalization of moral values is at the core of socialization theories which postulate a sequence from self-interest to conformity with social values (Hoffmann, 1970) and, possibly, to moral autonomy (Blasi, 1993). Our results suggest that this Western socialization model is not universal and that it does not do justice to Asian persons with whom interpersonal concerns are dominant even in early development (see also Keller, 2004). Consistent with findings from other studies which highlight the concern for social harmony as a salient characteristic of the sociomoral reasoning in Asian societies including China (Boyes & Walker, 1988; Eckensberger & Zimba, 1997)

Chinese persons even in the youngest age group perceive the friendship dilemma as a conflict between two equally important obligations of friendship and altruism. Among the younger Chinese persons the culturally prescribed norm of altruism has priority over close friendship both regarding practical choice and moral judgment. This appears to be a result of the intensive moral socialization that Chinese children undergo in kindergarten and elementary school. Taking care of somebody who is new in the group is one of the rules that a morally good student must follow. Interestingly, however, in the course of 10 development the value of close friendship achieves priority over the culturally prescribed norm of altruism towards peers in the group. Thus our findings only partly confirm Berndt's (1993) speculation about cultural barriers against close friendship in China. They also support the constructivist approach according to which developmental change does not merely reproduce cultural norms (see also Turiel, 1998, this volume).

Individuals, far from being but passive recipients of implicit and explicit socialization through interactions with others, actively construct the meaning of relationships and moral norms. Socialization experiences in family and school are only one source of the construction process



of moral sensibility in friendship, a source apparently stronger in young childhood than in adolescence. Biological changes and increasing involvement in peer relationships in adolescence may represent a second source of moral growth. This appears to be general across the two different cultures which otherwise represent different life-worlds. Our findings concerning friendship can be interpreted to the effect that experience in peer and friendship relationships may modify and even transform prevailing cultural concerns and socialization patterns. Comparing the two dilemmas, it is clear, however, that friendship and parent–child relationships represent quite different contexts for moral reasoning.

While in the friendship context cultural differences in moral judgments appear to decrease in adolescence in the authority context cultural differences seem to persist or even increase. This finding may be interpreted to the effect that the cultural norm of filial piety represents a moral value of cultural importance so great that it is hard to transcend. The expectation of a relationship of equality between parents and children seems less strong in the Chinese than in Icelandic adolescents. It is an open question how much the norm of filial piety will be transformed in the process of modernization as some authors suspect (Ho, 1996). In the Western world processes of modernization have changed the unilateral structure of relationships that Piaget had in mind when he emphasized the differences between parent-child and peer- relationships. As mentioned above, Iceland represents a society that historically was characterized by more egalitarian parent–child relationships due to the specific life-conditions prevailing in settlement farms in the rural past (Edelstein, 1983). When interpreting the meaning and generalizability of our findings it should be kept in mind that sociomoral reasoning was assessed using only one dilemma in the context of peer- and parent–child relationships.

Clearly it would be desirable to vary the conflict situations in order to test for cross-situational stability. In the long run, however, we hope that our research data will provide a more comprehensive account of the structure of socio-moral reasoning in the two cultures by taking into account general reasoning about the norm of promise keeping, friendship and parent–child



relationships. A comparison of 19 year olds from both cultures permits to trace interpersonal moral reasoning about close relationships beyond adolescence. Cultural similarities and differences that were typical of adolescence were conserved into young adulthood (Keller, 2004). Young adults in both cultures revealed a shift from the adolescents' concerns for intimacy in relationship to concerns for autonomy observed in the friendship reasoning of Western young adults (Selman, 1980). However, Chinese emphasized the embeddedness of friendship-relationships in the wider society more strongly while Icelanders emphasized the private nature of close friendship. The present study should be viewed as a first step towards exploration of the little known territory of the morality of close relationships.

The autobiographical writing, *Half a Life* presents a more optimistic attitude toward the future than the previous ones: when a man can candidly face the dilemma of his own situation in life, he will fear nothing. Significantly, Naipaul empowers himself through his writing. Like his father before him, he is seeking his own home in the world; he constructs a home for himself through his creative writing. He constructs his own subjectivity via the powerful writing. Breytenbach discusses the relationship between writing and identity: "The individual creative act is certainly an attempt to make consciousness. This implies drawing upon memory. Memory, whether apocryphal or not, provides the feeding ground or the requisite space allowing for the outlining of imagination." (68). Through the "geographical imagination" of his writing, Naipaul creates a home for himself. He makes an effort to resist the sense of insecurity and of uncertainty. Willie in *Half a Life* decides to start a new life, no longer desiring to live under Ana's protection. He rethinks his life and decides to face challenges of the future without attempting to escape or withdraw. Willie remarkably rebuilds his identity and finds the placeslessness as a kind of placeness. He is caught in in-betweenness. Also, he must enjoy the third space. Naipaul, as an exiled writer, is caught in-between: writing between home and homelessness, he takes advantage of being an exile to create his own space, his own home, one which is simultaneously nowhere and everywhere. This is just like Timothy Weiss's critique on Naipaul's works: To be on the margins is to be part of yet not part of; in the self's encounter



with others, the exile can live a “double exteriority” for he or she belongs to two cultures without identifying wholly with either. The exile can engage in a cross-cultural dialogue and through that dialogue can affirm both his uniqueness and the interrelationship between himself and others. Thus, in terms of postcolonial perspectives, Willie in *Half a Life* just like Naipaul himself has the unfixed identity in the construction of subjectivity though he must experience the ruptures among subjectivity, geography, and language toward multicultural and fluid identity.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- [2] Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- [3] Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- [4] Chaudhuri, Amit (ed.). *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature*, London: Picador, 2001
- [5] Dharwadker, Vinay. “Formation of Indian-English Literature” from *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, Ed. Sheldon Pollack, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- [6] Ghosh, Amitav. “The Diaspora in Indian Culture” from *The Imam and the Indian: Prose Pieces*, New Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publishers and Permanent Black, 2002.
- [7] Kumar, Amitava (ed.). *Away: The Indian Writer as an Expatriate*, New York: Routledge, 2004.
- [8] Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna (ed.). *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*. New Delhi: Permanent Black Publishers, 2003.
- [9] Mishra, Sudesh. “From Sugar to Masala: Writing by the Indian Diaspora” from *An 196 Rupkatha Journal Vol 1 No 2 Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*, Ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.





- [10] Paranjape, Makarand. "Triple Ambivalence: Australia, Canada, and South Asia in the Diasporic Imagination" from *Journal of the Department of English*, Volume XXXII, Numbers 1 & 2, Eds. Sanjukta Dasgupta and Jharna Sanyal, Kolkata: Calcutta University, 2005-2006.
- [11] Rushdie, Salman. "Imaginary Homelands" from *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981 - 1991*, London: Granta Books, 1991.
- [12] Said, Edward W. "Reflections of an Exile." *Biblio: A Review of Books*, Volume IV, Number 11 & 12. Ed. Arvind N. Das. New Delhi: Brinda Datta, Nov-Dec 1999.
- [13] Simpson, John (ed.). *The Oxford Book of Exile*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995.  
Writer: Amit Shankar Saha, PhD researcher in English Literature, Calcutta
- [14] White, Landeg. V. S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction. London: Macmillan Press, 1975. Macmillan Press, 1975.
- [15] Quoted in Talib, Ismail S: 2002: *The Language of Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Routledge. London.
- [16] Carter, R, and Mc Rae, J. 1997: *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland*. London, Routledge.
- [17] Lamming, G.: 1992. *The Pleasures of Exile* Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.
- [18] Kapur, Akash: *One Little Indian: V.S. Naipaul and the new South Asian politics*. In *Transition* issue 78. pg. 55-56.
- [19] Said, Edward W.: *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts. 2000. page 116.
- [20] Naipaul, V.S. *A Turn in the South*. Penguin. London.
- [21] *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977) and *India: A Million Mutinies* (1990). See appendix I for a chronology of his publications.
- [22] *A Bend in the River* was the first of Naipaul's novels.
- [23] This essay was originally written in 1974. Cited from the reprint in the collection of essays *Literary Occasions*, London, Picador, 2004. pp. 162 to 180.



- [24] The title of the lecture is 'Two Worlds'. It is reprinted in the collection of essays by the author Literary Occasions, London: Picador, 2004, pp.181- 195.
- [25] Bayly, Susan. The New Cambridge History of India: Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age. Cambridge: U P, 1999.
- [26] Bawer, Bruce. "Civilization and V. S. Naipaul" The Hudson Review. New York, 55:3 (2002): 371-385. <<http://lion.chadswyck.co.uk/marketing/index.jsp>> Thu Jan 4 2007
- [27] Delany, Austin. "Review: Mother India as Bitch" Transition, Duke: U P, 26 (1966): 50-51.<<http://www.jstor.org>> Thu Jan 4 2007
- [28] Haynes, Edward S. "Review: India: A Wounded Civilization by V. S. Naipaul" The American Historical Review, American Historical Association, 83: 4 (1978): 1079-1080.<<http://www.jstor.org>> Thu Jan 4 2007
- [29] Hughes, Peter. V. S. Naipaul. London: Routledge, 1988.
- [30] Johnson, Sarah. "Naipaul, V. S. (Vidiadhar Surajprasad), 1932-" Literature Online biography, Literature Online. <<http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing/index.jsp>> Thu Jan 4 2007