

Naipaul's Vision

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V. S. Naipaul

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Abstract

This paper intends to highlight Naipaul's work with special focus on his themes and vision of the world. This paper also discusses some of Naipaul's works in order to provide a better outlook on Naipaul's literary themes and techniques.

Naipaul's Background and His Literary Career

Naipaul's prolific career is well noted. Although his parents descended from Hindu immigrants from Northern India, Naipaul's inability to form a spiritual connection with his tradition could be felt in his work. Naipaul went back to his own life experiences for material. Naipaul enjoys a great command over English language and its tradition. On graduation, Naipaul

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started his career as a freelance writer. He became a writer in the mid-1950's, by examining his own Trinidadian background. He has received almost all the major awards in the field of literature, especially for his fiction work. The biggest accolade he was given was the Nobel Prize he received in the year 2001.

In Search of Reality in Naipaul's Fiction

We went to Naipaul's work, specially his fiction, not for fantasy but in search of reality. After going through his work, we could say that Naipaul is amongst the finest writers of the 'realistic novel', which develops the sense of personal realization. The lack of tradition and sense of being rootless remains the hallmark of his fiction. He has completely related his literature to life and to its situations, especially to the common man's predicament.

An Original Voice of His Time

The interviewers of the *Newsweek* article call him "one of the few original voices of his time" (*Newsweek*). He presents the telescopic view of the world (especially societies) in his novels. He points out the problems and follies, with a special focus on the Third World.

The Feeling of Alienation

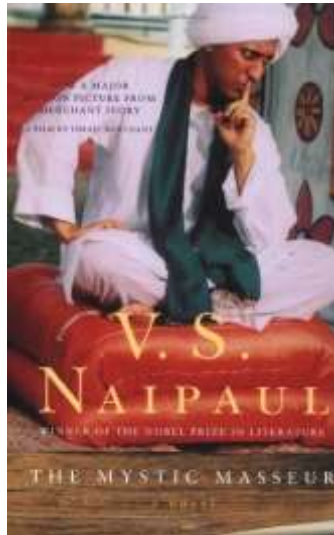
Most of his fiction seems to begin with complexities of life and end up with self-realization as a whole. Naipaul depicts the social, political as well as personal reality in his novels. Naipaul's writings deal with the problems of the outsider which is a merger of fictitious characters as well as a feature of his own experience as an Indian in West Indies and a West Indian in England. He feels separated from India and from its culture.

Excellence in Writing

Naipaul cannot be called exclusively, as a novel writer, short story writer, travel writer or a biographer, but rather as one uses all these forms to bring his readers close to reality. Whatever

genre he is writing in, he tries to achieve the standard of mature literature. Naipaul has received delayed recognition, but thereafter he received most of the major awards for English fiction.

Naipaul's Early Book



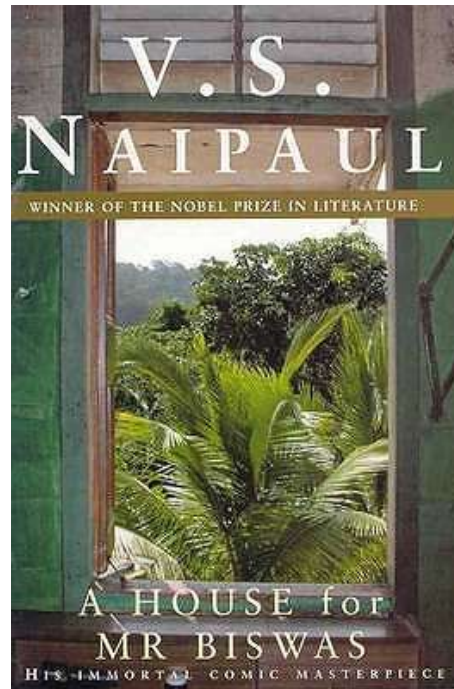
Naipaul's first three books are comic portraits of Trinidadian society. His first published work *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) is about a common man Ganesh who rises from the profession of masseur to a healer and finally a powerful politician. *The Mystic Masseur* won the Mail on Sunday prize in 1958. In his other novel *Miguel Street* (1959), the reader could see again glimpses of Trinidadian life, where the narrator befriends many of people on Miguel Street. It

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depicts how the outside influences affected the narrator and the main characters, leading up to their leaving their birth place in search of identity.



A House for Mr. Biswas (1961) is termed as Naipaul's masterpiece, which narrates the story of Mohan Biswas, an Indo-Trinidadian who strives for success and finally sets the goal of owning his own house. It is basically based on his father's life in Trinidad.

Political Themes

Subsequent novels developed more political themes and he began to write about colonial and post-colonial societies. These novels include *The Mimic Men* (1967), winner of the 1968 WH Smith Literary award. *In a Free State* (1971) won the Booker prize for fiction. This novel is wholly about people away from home. The novels *Guerrillas* (1975) and *A Bend in the River* (1979) are set in Africa. *Guerrillas* is set on an un-named island, dominated by post-colonial British. The novel *A Bend in the River* is narrated by Salim, an ethnic Indian Muslim and a

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shopkeeper in a small growing city. *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) is a personal account of his life in England. *The Suffrage of Elvira* is a comic novel, again set in Trinidad, describing a local election and satiric examination of the consequences of political change.

Trinidad as the Background

Most of Naipaul's works are set in Trinidad and describe the political and social realities of that place. Naipaul's protagonist is the common man, striving and yearning for identity. *Half a Life* was published in 2001, which describes the adventures of an Indian, Willie Chandran, in post-war Britain. Finally, *Magic Seeds*, published in 2004 continues this story.

Ancestral Bond

It is rightly said that ancestral bond can never be broken. This bond brought Naipaul to India, after which he published his work *An Area of Darkness*, a factual account of his journey to India, the mythical land of his childhood. He published another book *India: A Wounded Civilization*, in which he outrages and antagonizes Indians.

According to an interview by Shyam Ratna Gupta, printed in *The Hindustan Times Weekly*, May 31, 1981, Naipaul had said, "I should like to settle down in Bombay and rediscover my identity by losing myself in the millions of Indians." He has written some important travel documents such as *Among the Believers*, which presents his very controversial views of Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. His other travel book *A Turn in the South* describes his peregrinations through the Deep South of USA.

A Master of English Prose

V.S. Naipaul is a master of English Prose and uses multiple elements in his work like dramatization, realization and reflection of oneself, in order to generate interest in readers. Naipaul provides a great blend of biographical and autobiographical elements in his work. Paul

Theroux argues that Naipaul is "wholly original" and that "he may be the only writer today in whom there are no echoes or influences" (Cudjoe 8).

Overall we can say that Naipaul has explored not only his culture and tradition but that of other lands as well. The characters and situations described by V.S. Naipaul may differ from work to work, but the central theme remained the same: Realism and the sense of being rootless.

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