



Progress Amid The East-Indians In V. S. Naipaul's Selected Fiction

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ABSTRACT: *Sir Vidiadhar Surujprasad Naipaul provided structure and words to the gimit ideology and the Indian diaspora its unique exposition and awareness. Naipaul's first writing material started with the Caribbean. Trinidadian subjects engage an advantaged position, essential in Naipaul's writings. In exploring this theme, my focal point is on five fictional works, namely The Mystic Masseur (1957), The Suffrage of Elvira (1958), Miguel Street (1959), A House for Mr. Biswas (1961), The Mimic Men (1967), and A Christmas Story (1962). The rationale is to explore illustrations in Naipaul's writing by positioning the relevant representations of indenture in a greater discursive perspective.*

The foremost apprehensions in post-colonial literatures, particularly in Naipaul's previous imaginary writings correspond to mainly the three aspects of Trinidad as it emerges in Naipaul's works. At the outset, the existence of the Indo-Trinidadians is a replication of living in India, their native homeland. They also take on the Western means in their innovative colonial society; in the procedure erode significant aspects of their mores and distinctive Indian individuality. Secondly, they were focused to an individuality predicament amid two domicile areas. Thirdly, the dislocation faced by the indentured labourers and their successors.

Naipaul in his writings highlights the un-accommodated man's recurring efforts to find a secure position in a dilapidated and unsystematic world, his great effort for individualism although facing deprivation, dislocation and unfair treatment. He mocks the sham of independence for former British colonies. Meaningful issues: family ceremonies in uniting people, the idea of progress being associated with a British education and the colonial stereotype of the East Indians are discussed by Naipaul.

One could regard this study as an acknowledgment to an isle where indentured labourers were dispatched and it is one of the noteworthy areas on the map of the fictional world produced by V. S. Naipaul, a successor of the indentured immigrants.

Keywords: *Diaspora, Displacement, Identity, Indenture, Progress*

I. INTRODUCTION

V. S. Naipaul connects the notion of progress with the attainment of a British instruction. Deceitful performances were widespread amid the East Indians. The indenture scheme in Trinidad detained the indentured labourers bounded to penury and the inability to read and write. They, therefore, implanted in the psyches of their offspring the thought that attaining British schooling was essential to progress and to assemble wealth.

The *Mystic Masseur* is a British and West Indian narrative, incorporating methods of the English work of fiction, like mockery and caricature, and of the Caribbean society like festival, melody and creolization, that is, new African American cultures emerge in the New World. It is a concise, comical trip about Ganesh Ramsumair, a self-important, pleasant immature Trinidadian of moderate schooling and inadequate religious inclinations who staggers into a flourishing vocation as a righteous man and physician and ultimately a nationalized opinionated superior. This novel demonstrates the creation of a 'mimic man'. In the process of whirling a vocation as a witch doctor into diplomatic achievement, the protagonist, Ganesh, purchases a entire volume of *Everyman's Library*, improves "his prose to a Victorian weightiness" and installs, in his house, a musical toilet- paper rack that plays "Yankee Doodle Dandy".

Ganesh, the central character, "was to be a hero of the people and, after that a British representative at Lake Success." (11) The quest of British instruction is seen as very significant. Ganesh is a personification of

the representation 'from rags to riches'. He is the writer of life story, with the heading *The Years of Guilt*, which was produced at Ganesh Publishing Co. Ltd., Port of Spain and cost only \$2.40. Ganesh commented:

Everything happens for the best. If, for instance, my first volume had been a success, it is likely that I would have become a mere theologian, writing endless glosses on the Hindu scriptures. As it was, I found my true path (112). The methods of Ganesh and others of the appearance of progress and insight interconnect whilst an Indian entrepreneur proposes thirty thousand dollars "for the cultural uplift of Trinidad Hindus" (158). Subsequent to changing the funds in his ability as leader of the Trinidad Hindu Association, Ganesh does not do much to create awareness, or to revive the local Hindus.

For Ganesh, the expression of progress is connected with accounts of deceitfulness. However, these expressions are challenged once again. Ganesh establishes a newsprint, *The Dharma*, as a opinionated bludgeon in opposition to his contender, Narayan. An unidentified boy journalist rouses a little spur through this piece of writing:

Today the aeroplane is a common garden sight and it is commonly believed that progress in this field has only been made in the past forty years. But diligent research is proving otherwise and in this learned dispatch Dr C.V.R. Swami shows that 2,000 years ago there was

- And in huge black letters:

Flying In Ancient India (183)

The writing of the olden times is by a Colonized youngster, who stipulates the legend of progress in the tag of the marginalized. An additional stipulation is with the aim of the Roman characters, which is reiterated in a teasing way - "the boy knew all about cross-headings and used them every paragraph" (183). It is not amazement then that the response of the grown-up printer to the childlike rebellion is an aggressive outburst: the printer, Basdeo advised Ganesh later, "Sahib, if you ever send that boy again to have anything print, I think I go wring his neck" (183).

Narayan and Indarsingh are the main enthusiastic followers of the European centered principle of progress. They are Ganesh's challengers for the approval of the Trinidad Hindu society. Consequently, Indarsingh positions himself as a contender, a representative of the Party for Progress and Unity, the PPU, at the 1946 General Election. The voting ends, the party just vanishes, make up one more illustration for the deceit tied with the devise of progress. Further exciting distracter is the successive lines from the same work of fiction:

The Little Bird [Narayan's pseudonym as a journalist writing for *The Hindu*] said:

"I am just a little birdie but I think it is surely a retrograde step for any community these days to look up to a religious visionary [Ganesh]..." Spare inches of the magazine [*The Hindu*] were no longer filled up with quotations from the Gita or the Upanishads. Now it was all: Workers' Unite! Each One Teach One, Mens Sana in Corpore Sano, per Ardua and Astra. The Hindu is an Organ of Progress, I may not agree with what you say but I will fight to the death to defend your right to say it (162-163).

There is the similar following of Manichaeism philosophy, on one side the "progressive' Western mores characterized by Latin and Marxist established expressions and alternatively, the backward customs of conventional Hinduism represented by the Gita and the Upanishads. In reality, the clash amid Western civilization with its personal race and customary Hindu customs is a significant subject of what Claudia Ebel analyzes as 'Trinidadromane' (1988: 82). She claims that the particular conflict would end in 'culture shock' and estrangement (1988: 82 and 201).

An approach use by Narayan's is similar to one selected by one more 'mimic man', Randolph (formerly known as Choonilal), exhibits repulsion at the 'backwardness' of his Hindu people causes him to change to Christianity and take on Western practices:

I did not have to be 'converted' by the Presbyterians of the Canadian Mission. I had only to look at the work they were doing among the backward Hindus and Moslems of my district. I had only to look at their schools, to look at the houses of the converted [...] Backwardness has always roused me to anger (34).

The central character, Randolph, of *A Christmas Story* (1962), sees the Western Presbyterians as 'progressive':

But I ought to say in my own defense that it is my deeply held conviction that progress is not a matter of outward show, but an attitude of mind; and it was this that my religion gave me (35-36).

Randolph represents an apparent illustration of what Patrick Hogan refers as 'purgative mimeticism', where "the mimic seeks to purge every suggestion of indigenous culture from his or her thought and action"

(Hogan, 2000: 320). It is sufficient to state that Choonilal gave up his Hindu name, like the central characters of *The Mystic Masseur* or *The Mimic Men*.

The Mimic Men (1967) is situated on a fabricated Caribbean Island – Isabella. This work of fiction is clever in its examination of the past inheritance of colonialism and several of its opinionated and psychosomatic consequences. The unpredictable raconteur, Ralph Singh, an unsuccessful politician and idealistic strives with a series of personalities and images, and the story is thus dislodged and has recurrent swings in time. The narrative is about the predicaments confronted by recently liberated countries at the same time it also reveals that those writers are of the belief that their books deal with the concerns of the third world but in fact they are written works are about themselves.

The Mimic Men stresses the resistance system (England) – chaos (Isabella/Trinidad). Thienne points out that in the novel's ending one can discover an astonishing personification of the perfect arrangement in the individual of the Englishman given the nickname "Garbage" by Ralph Singh (1985: 23-24).

Garbage also sits behind a pillar. His hands are all I can see of him. They are long, middle-aged, educated hands; and their primary concern appears to be to convert a plate of meat and vegetables into a plate of acceptable garbage. While chaos comes swiftly and simultaneously to other plates; while meat is hacked and pushed around and vegetables mangled and scattered on a spreading, muddy field of gravy, while knives and forks, restlessly preparing fresh, mixed mouthfuls, probe the chaos they have created, and cut and spear and plaster; those two hands are unhurriedly, scientifically, maintaining order, defining garbage, separating what is to be eventually eaten from what is to be thrown away.

(245)

These lines can be read as an metaphor of the British Empire, which as an alternative of 'civilizing', and 'uplifting' its colonies, debases the 'margins' (Dhahreshwar, 1989: 89-90).

For example, *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) many regard this novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) as V. S. Naipaul's magnum opus, demonstrates the ethnic disagreement inside Trinidadian people in a more subtle way. In the instance of Aryans:

the protestant Hindu missionaries who had come from India and were preaching that caste was unimportant, that Hinduism should accept converts, that idols should be abolished, that women should be educated (110).

P. Hogan defines traditionalism and the set of guidelines of progress productively meeting each other in a course that is similar as:

"orthodoxy", namely "open-minded, flexible adherence to indigenous culture, with particular emphasis on large ethical or social principles, rather than on specific customary practices. Orthodox tradition is open to 'modernization' in the sense of rational reform guided by both scientific and ethical principles [...]" (2000: 319).

The aforementioned amalgam situation is also the one taken on by Mr. Biswas and his actual corresponding person – Seepersad, Naipaul's father.

The persistent subject matter in Naipaul's books, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *The Mystic Masseur* and *Miguel Street*, is the apprehension of the grown-ups for children's schooling and profession potentials. Amongst the East Indians, who came to Trinidad, very few had the opportunity of experience to recognized instruction. They, however, are aware of the significance of education. They make a great effort and forfeit so their offspring could gain from schooling. The formal instruction changed the East Indian society. These bonded workers have left magnificent inheritances that supported them to establish themselves and exist in a new country. These inheritances comprise: family life and values, tough labour thrift, thrift, strength of mind, resolution, determination, dedication, bravery and confidence. They embraced the English language and became accustomed to the Creolite mores for their offspring to progress.

Education was given an elevated precedence; regarded as a very important tool to make a position for their own selves in the new country. V.S. Naipaul's grandparents and his parents believed in education as the road to progress. Both Naipaul and his sister, Kamla, exceptional academically, were persuaded to study for overseas study (French, 2008: 55). Naipaul's friend, William Demas, saw an erudition as a way to get away from the "hole" and search for "freedom" overseas. The Mother country, referring to Trinidad as a 'hole' and considering there was no prospect for a determined individual in the Caribbean (1959). This thought was widespread at the time and by no way confined to those of Indian descent.

In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the children get educated in foreign countries. They either come back or stay behind there. Owad received a scholarship to United Kingdom for medical studies. "Savitri got a

scholarship and went abroad. Two years later Anand got a scholarship and went to England" (619). The Indian parents were determined for their children, aspiring to provide them the schooling that they failed to get. To receive a scholarship was much esteemed amid the Indian people. Mr. Biswas, Shama and the girls consented that Anand would go to college in spite of the financial constraints. Anand had milk and ate prunes to help him in studies.

The significance of schooling is revealed in A House for Mr. Biswas as being superior:

..... 'You mean Seebaran getting that just for filling up those dotted lines? Education, boy. It have nothing like a profession.'

'You is your own boss, if you is a professional man,' Moti said, his voice touched with a remote sadness.

'But one twenty, man. Five minutes' writing for one twenty.'

'You forgetting that Seebaran had to spend years and years studying all sort of big and heavy books before they allow him to send out papers like this.'

'You know the thing to do is to have three sons. Make one a doctor, one a dentist, and one a lawyer.'
(182)

The East Indians' perception of schooling is connected with progress and prosperity for one and being one's own boss subsequent to the mean and merciless conduct throughout the indenture. They desire their offspring to exceed these situations not only to attain an improved living but also not to be historical serf like they were. Biswas discovered from his son, Anand's educators that Anand could come first in an exposition if he made more effort, and Mr. Biswas made available personal classes for Anand after school. Mr. Biswas also organized for Anand to receive unrestricted loan at the school shop. This shows Indian parents' anxiety for their children's tutoring regardless of their great effort to meet all other expenditures.

Mohun Biswas devoted time with his children training and supporting them to improve. He read work of fictions to them. Mohun Biswas in A House for Mr. Biswas:

From time to time he called for their exercise books, said he was horrified, and set himself up as their teacher for a few days. He cured Anand of a leaning towards fancy lettering and got him to abridge the convolutions of his C and J and S. With Savi he could do nothing. As a teacher he was exacting and short-tempered (358).

Biswas not only helped his children with their lessons, but sent them to Sunday school for joy and they benefitted from learning hymns with appealing melody. Children were introduced to Hindu spiritual activities in the Tulsi family circle and yet it is noted that Biswas introduces his family to Christianity, another type of education.

In The Mystic Masseur, Ganesh's father, an elderly gentleman, desired Ganesh to be educated in a "town college". He sends Ganesh to Queen's Royal College with the income he obtains from the oil corporations. Mr. Ramsumair showed off to his companions and associates about enrolling his son in the 'town college'. Ganesh passed the Cambridge School Certificate in the second grade. With the help of his headmaster, Ganesh was able to enroll in Port of Spain's Teachers Government Training College. Ganesh came back to Fourways after his father's passing away. His education assisted him to turn out to be prominent as a masseur, an author, a pious healer (a pundit), and an opinionated head of Trinidadian Hindus, being voted for in 1946 election as a M. L. C. to be designated as "Hon'ble Ganesh Ramsumair, M.L.C" (205) and afterwards was honoured with a M.B.E. title. He altered his name to 'G. Ramsay Muir' (220).

The Indian indentured labourers foresee for their children this kind of vision. They give them schooling to become autonomous and be their own boss. At the same time, the writer exposes the shrewdness of the Indian people, as in Ramlogan, Beharry and Narayan to progress, to achieve a name for themselves.

In Miguel Street, we see an Indian mother's desire for her son to be sent overseas for further education. Indian parents demonstrate their anxiety if their children are "getting wild" (166).

My mother said, 'You getting too wild in this place. I think is high time you leave.'

...I go go and talk to Ganesh Pundit about it. He was a friend of your father. But you must go from here. You getting too wild.'

(166)

These lines emphasize an Indian mother's apprehension and aspiration for her children not only to put a stop to them from making erroneous decisions but also to send them overseas to study. The writer's mother acquires a scholarship for from her son to study drugs in London by paying Pundit Ganesh. The readers become aware of the dishonesty engaged in attaining a scholarship. Hon'able Ganesh Ramsumair accepts bribe to give a scholarship (168). He said, "Is when you back from England, with all sorts of certificate and paper, a big man and a big druggist, is then I go come round and ask you for what you owe me" (169).

The Indians like Ganesh use their education and their position in the Government for their personal gain and use devious and corrupt means to help others.

The illiterate East-Indians struggled to give their children the formal education that they themselves did not get. Educating Hindu girls was not a priority but it can be seen that girls were later educated as seen in the work of fictions, *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mystic Masseur*. The concern for educating the children was to accumulate wealth and gain success leading to progress.

Diasporic theories and concepts draw attention to the themes emerging from Naipaul's selected fiction to show how it is that diasporic people settle between their current place of settlement and their birth or ancestral homelands; the nature of shock connected with migration or separation; and how such societies' feeling of belonging, homeland and individuality are changed by journeys out.

Thinking of "home" and "away from home" is synonymous with residing in a strange land (Chambers in Ahmed, 88). However, for an Indo-Trinidadian diasporic consciousness, home is both familiar yet strange, resulting in a constant sense of not quite belonging and yet no going back, which is common to many marginalized communities. One might consider Indo-Trinidadians as wanderers; they have been on the move, not belonging to India, or fully to Trinidad, or even to new diasporic places such as United Kingdom (Simpson, 492). Mishra interprets the "familiar temporariness" of their homes as a "virtue of necessity", perhaps emerging from post-colonial ethnic tensions that affected almost all old Indian diaspora communities ("Bordering Naipaul" 227; Tinker, Banyan: 200). Indo-Trinidadians, then, have adjusted to multiple migrations – not out of choice, but out of necessity.

Naipaul admits his indebtedness to one type of lila, namely the Ramlila (that is the religious drama enacting the story of Hindu hero Rama) in his essay "Reading and Writing" (1998), which gave thoughts for the renowned novel *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Ramlila, the story of exile, is also representative of the dislocation of the Indo-Trinidadian group of people. The dilemma of position and dislocation is a major feature of post-colonial literatures. Consequently, the representation of "Trinidad as Site of Displacement" is the indenture image in novels like *The Mimic Men* and *A House for Mr. Biswas*, which deliberate the arrival of Indians to Trinidad to labour for diminutive cash on the sugar agricultural estates. This procedure of dislocation may elucidate why Naipaul stands for the Indo-Trinidadian group of people as a ritual civilization. The diaspora crowds adhere to the representations of celebrations, following the loss of their mother languages, may be to have a sense of belonging and to progress in a new environment.

The struggle and the inhumane conditions under which the Indian labourers toiled to survive in the indenture period have long been under discussion and still is today. The representations of these people, as recorded by the many Indo-Fijian writers: S. Nandan, Subramani, V. Mishra, S. Mishra, R. Pillay, and M. Prasad, express the discontentment and displacement felt by the indentured labourers and their descendants.

In reality, rites and rituals are the main transporters of Indianness in Trinidad. Naipaul's Indo-Trinidadians keep hold of their cultural individualities; thus, cultural celebrations and rites appear as times of intensification of family relationships. For example, in *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the Hanuman House – the fortress of the Tulsi clan, preserved the celebratory occurrences, bringing back together numerous generations within its walls that classify the Ramayana classic – to the Western residence followed by Mr. Biswas. The individual recitals may even turn out to be indications of objection in opposition to imposing rule. Several of the Hindu ceremonies, portrayed by Naipaul, maintain gender and class chain of commands. For instance, in *The Mystic Masseur* and *A House for Mr. Biswas* rites reinforce male Brahmin power.

Naipaul characterizes his resident island as a typically smallish place, a minute spot on a number of charts as stated in *The Mystic Masseur*, whose representation is a doll's house in the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men*; the depiction diminishes the colonial margin. Children representation as colonized articulates Naipaul's design of imposing imitation, which is to articulate, the replication by the children of the colonizer by the colonized. Numerous of Naipaul's Trinidadian characters have both immature attributes and unreasonable actions. Therefore, schools are regarded as an additional significant colonial organization, as a tool in the British kingdom's scheme of bringing under control and civilizing its people. Naipaul represents Trinidadian students in the novels, *The Mystic Masseur*, *Miguel Street*, *The Mimic Men*, and *A House for Mr. Biswas* as examples of imitating the westerners to become like them meaning to achieve progress but may be regarded as a disappointment to develop into mature grownups and accept the principles of Christian teachings.

Naipaul's novels represent a stadium where a number of discussions meet, deal with each other and have common characteristics, guiding to descriptions open to a diversity of explanations. Naipaul's fictions have been and will carry on to continue being extremely powerful. Consequently, it is significant to illustrate those indentured depictions which have to a great extent in universal similarities with imposing, Eurocentric typecasts, without overlooking, nevertheless, the conflicting characteristics of the greater part of Naipaul's works. Nonetheless, Naipaul's illustrations of the Indo-Trinidadian society are a great deal more optimistic

when contrasted to the picture of the Afro-Trinidadians, which deeply depending on colonial labels. By focusing on Indians and on the Afro-Caribbean populace, Naipaul's literature mirrors the multinational made up of Trinidad.

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