



V.S. Naipaul's "A Turn in the South": A Journey of the writer to unveil the spirit of South America

Neetu¹

¹Research Scholar (English), S.R.K. (PG) College, Firozabad

ABSTRACT

Change is the law of nature. This law is applied on all aspects of life whether it is culture, civilization or literature. Since its beginning literature has changed and developed various forms. It was during the second half of the 20th century that "an offspring of the New Journalistic novel" came into existence and was recognized as the non-fictional prose which K.R.S. Iyengar defines as:

"A basket that bulges with variety: history, biography, autobiography, translation, travelogue, literary journalism."

Travelogue is one of the various forms of non-fictional prose. It is a diary and narrative of travel, sport and adventure. It is a blend of description, anecdote and personal commentary. A travelogue treats a multifarious range of things from art to science and from cookery to scientific discovery. In the words of Mallikarjun Patil:

"Travelogue is a work of art like any form of literature. It is a genre of historical realistic fictional work. It is a light work but valid and interesting enough to read and enjoy it."

Honored with the prestigious Nobel Prize for literature, a Trinidadian novelist and essayist of the Indo-Trinidadian descent, Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul popularly known as Sir V.S. Naipaul occupies a prominent place among the most admired literary figure of the 20th century English Literature.

Naipaul's creative works comprise novels, short stories, travelogues and other non-fictional writings. He has travelled various parts of the world. Whatever he saw in the other parts of the world, he enjoyed and recorded it in his finest travelogues. My present paper focuses on one of the finest travelogues "A Turn in the South" which with various references to historical events, rise and growth of industries, social, cultural and religious conditions and political upheavals presents black and white picture of South America.

Keywords: Travelogue, non-fiction, self-reliance, stifling, rootlessness

Naipaul is, to a great extent, a widely travelled cosmopolitan writer, a fact that he himself considers to stem from his lack of roots. He feels himself on Indian in the West Indies, a West Indian in England and a nomadic intellectual in the post-colonial world. His travelling has played a significant role in shifting his writings from fiction to non-fiction. Mohit K. Ray remarks:

"Naipaul is one of literature's great travellers and his leading theme of rootlessness, the alienating effects of colonial past on today's post-colonial people, has taken him to Africa,



South America, India and all over the world, not in search of roots but in search of rootlessness.”

He is a prolific dissenter and has a uniquely authoritative position as an interpreter of the Oriental, Caribbean and South American Societies. Arvind Adiga remarks:

“Naipaul has written about black people in way no white man could ever have got away with.”

“A Turn in the South” (1989) is Naipaul’s attempt to explore and explain the American South. After “The Middle Passage” (1962) and “The Loss of El Dorado” (1969) it is the third book about slavery and the New World. He portrays this unique region as a strange mixture of self-reliance, community, desperation and playfulness. About this book Sunday Telegraph records:

“This is a journey below the Mason-Dixon line into a society reviv by too many defeats; the broken cause of the old confederacy, and the frustrated anger of Southern blacks whose power is circumscribed.”

He visits different parts of South America and presents an authentic picture of this region painted with real colors. During his visits to Atlanta, Charleston, Tallahassee and Jackson, Mississippi, Naipaul observes complexity of society.

During his trip to Atlanta, which is the capital of New South, he finds out that blacks may have gained political power but not economic power and that the one without the other is worse. He writes:

“By the standards of American wealth, blacks in Atlanta were not wealthy... Political powers without the other sort of power are meaningless.”

In Charleston Naipaul observes the misery of the black servants who were bound to live generally on the lower floors in the cells with bars on the windows. During his visit to Tallahassee he comes to know that in the early days of motor car, the black had not been allowed to drive in South Carolina. In Tallahassee, the black were not permitted to try on clothes in stores. When Naipaul visits Jackson, Mississippi, he observes a kind of racial hardness in Alabama particularly Mississippi. While his visit to timber factory at Canton he was surprised to note that the rail track had divided the good side of the town from the bad one. Naipaul felt shocked when Mary informed him about agriculture and industries depression among the people of the South because slavery had led to present superfluity of the black people who were no longer needed in a machine age. Mr. William, a local person throws light on racial hardness between the black and the white:

“People of north think they know better than us about the problems and people down here.”

The local people of Nashville tell him about the problem of talent migration due to lack of progress opportunity. The creative people from South were Stifling to other parts of California.



Besides facing these bitter conditions Naipaul have some pleasant experiences in South America. Naipaul has given a picturesque description of Tuskegee Institution now Tuskegee University. He describes:

“The whole area, the Black Belt, is a poor area, and Tuskegee was really an oasis for blacks.”

Nissan plant at Smyrna gives a picture of developing corporate culture:

“The corporate culture was adopted due to several reasons. Wages and attractive.... Nissan provides many fringe benefits. ‘Wellness’- that’s one a new word in our lexion, a process of becoming and remaining well.”

With its natural beauty of clouds, mountains, rivers and tobacco culture Chapel Hill is well reflected in the book. In Chapel Hill Naipaul have long interviews with tobacco-growing community of the people. Howard tells him:

“I think that tobacco in its best incarnation was a sort of folk art. An art practiced by people who were extremely good at it but who might not be able to read and write.”

Thus “A Turn in the South” is Naipaul’s devastating journey into the soul of the American South.

REFERENCES

1. K.R.S. Iyengar, “Indian Writing in English”, New Delhi. Sterling Publishers Ltd. 2003 p. 761
2. Mallikarjun Patil, “Naipaul, V.S. : The Travel Writer”, Mohit K. Ray (ed),*V.S. Naipaul: Critical essays, Vol II p. 146
3. Mohit K. Ray (ed), V.S. Naipaul: Critical essays, Vol I, New Delhi : atlantic Publishers and distributors, 2002, Preface, p. vi
4. Arvind Adiga, “Magical Thinking” Web. November 29;2013
5. Sunday Telegraphs, V.S. Naipaul, the back cover page of A Turn in the South, London: Picador, 2003
6. V.S. Naipaul, A Turn in the South, p. 26
7. V.S. Naipaul, A Turn in the South, p. 183
8. V.S. Naipaul, A Turn in the South, p. 145
9. V.S. Naipaul, A Turn in the South, p. 261
10. V.S. Naipaul, A Turn in the South, p. 272