

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born into a Brahmin family in Chaguanas, Trinidad, on 17 August 1932 to Seepersad Naipaul and Bropatie Naipaul. His Hindu grandfather had emigrated there from West India as an indentured servant. His father, Seepersad Naipaul, was a journalist whose literary aspirations were inherited by Vidiadhar and his brother, Shiva. In 1938, they moved to Port of Spain where V.S Naipaul attended Queens Royal College. In that college then, he got a government scholarship to study literature at University College, Oxford in 1950. After he was graduated in 1953, he worked as a freelance writer with the BBC and the literary journal, *The New Statesman*. His first principal long fiction was *The Mystic Masseur*, published in 1957 which gave him The John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize. Other principal long fictions written by him were *Miguel Street* in 1959 which won The Somerset Maugham Award, *Mr. Stone and The Knights Companion* in 1963 which won The Hawthornden Prize, *An Area of Darkness* (1964) which gave him a Phoenix Trust Award, *In a Free State* (1971) which gave him The Booker Prize. *The Enigma of Arrival* was published in 1987 telling about the journey of a Caribbean writer to England. This novel is considered by many critics as his autobiography since there are similarities in the life of the central character and Naipaul. His last two novels were *A Way in the World* (1994) and *Half A Life* (2001). Besides writing fictions, Naipaul has also written several works of nonfiction which include *The Middle Passage* (1962), *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *The Loss of El Dorado: A History* (1969), *The Overcrowded Barracoon and Other Articles* (1972), *India: A*

Wounded Civilization (1977), *The Return of Eva Peron with the Killings in Trinidad* (1980), *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981), *Finding the Centre* (1984), *A Turn in the South* (1989), *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), and *Beyond Belief* (1998).

Most of his nonfictions are based on his travels which he had done extensively. Beyond his career as a full-time writer, Naipaul has followed no other profession. He is a man completely dedicated to his art. Because of his dedication, throughout his life Naipaul has been awarded some titles from various universities, among others the title of DLitt from University of West Indies, Hon. Dr Letters from Columbia University in New York, Hon. Litt.D. from Cambridge University, Hon. D.Litt. from London University, and Hon. D.Litt. from Oxford University. In 1989, Naipaul was knighted by the Royal Family, so he is allowed to use 'Sir' in front of his name. In 1993 he was awarded David Cohen Literature Award in recognition of a 'lifetime's achievement by a living British writer and in 2001 he was awarded the most prestigious prize, The Nobel Prize For Literature by The Swedish Academy. About his family life, Naipaul married an English woman named Patricia Ann Hale in 1955. Since then, he has resided in London, but in 1970 he moved to Wiltshire. His wife died in 1996, and he was remarried shortly thereafter to a Pakistani woman named Nadira Khannum Alvi.

SYNOPSIS

V.S Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* is a novel in five sections which tells about the experience of a Trinidadian writer dealing with his settlement in England and the way he develops himself by living there. In this particular novel, the writer is the narrator of the novel who tells events that happen in his life. The first section entitled "Jack's Garden" deals with the narrator's movement and settlement into a cottage in Wiltshire, near the town of Salisbury, England. He is still nervous of being in a new place and meeting other people because he considers himself as a stranger and he is in the other man's country even though he has been living in England for about twenty years. Every day he takes a walk around his cottage and he notices that the place is quiet and so natural. Gradually he feels in tune with the landscape, therefore he can shed his nerves of being a stranger in England. Besides observing the landscape, the narrator also observes his neighbors, and the first man he gets to know is a gardener named Jack. At first, he considers Jack as merely a figure in the landscape and he only observes Jack from distance. However, Jack is very friendly to the narrator and the neighborliness is established between the narrator and Jack. Besides Jack, there is a neighbor named Les who is also friendly to him. In the end of this section, the narrator finally discovers that Wiltshire is a very important place to him because he has something like a second life there and also he is able to live with peace and comfort.

In the second section entitled 'The Journey', the narrator recalls back his journey when he was eighteen. At that time he got a scholarship to study in

Oxford, so he had to leave his homeland, Trinidad. For that time being, he only learned about England from his education which he called 'colonial education'. Thus, England he knew was only based on his readings of the schoolbooks and English literary works that he got from his education. This led him to be an idealistic person toward English buildings and the concept of being a writer. During his journey to England by a ship called S.S Columbia, there was a black man which was intended to be placed in the narrator's cabin. The black man said to the cabin crew that they had put him there because he had been coloured. This made the narrator aware that he was also a coloured man and that was what the cabin crew saw in him so that they put the black man in his cabin. After he arrived in London, the capital city of England, the narrator **was** shocked when he found out that England was not the same place as he had idealized. He was desperate and lonely for he was in an unknown and strange city, moreover he could not find friends in his boarding house. However, he kept being there since he wanted to fulfill his ambition of being a writer, yet deep in his heart, he always hoped to go back to his homeland. Since he was an idealistic person toward the concept of being a writer, he tried to match the concept by **looking** for the metropolitan material which enables him to display the sensibility and inward development. Nevertheless, this effort made him stuck in his writing. Eventually he learned that the concept was not suitable to him since he found out that the subject of his writings was the world he contained within himself. However, being a writer was difficult to him, and as a result he could not go on **with** his writings. Meanwhile, he had **a** chance to go back to his homeland, Trinidad. To his surprise, his island has changed; the island was full of racial tensions and was

close to revolution. He felt homeless. There was no other choice except going back to England. **All** of these things led the narrator to become a depressed and secluded person. In the end of this section, the narrator moved to Wiltshire after moving from house to house. The beauty of the place fascinated him and it suited him since he looked a place for remoteness and a place to hide.

The third and fourth section are actually the extensions of the first section since these three sections are concerned with the narrator's sojourn in a cottage on an estate in Wiltshire. In the third section entitled "Ivy", the narrator has an illness because he has been exhausted in doing his work. **As** the weeks pass, he realizes that he has a kind of tropical fever he has had once when he has been a child. This kind of fever, to his wonder, makes no misery or afflictions to him; instead it helps him to remove the stress from his head including the dream of an exploding head that often leaves him shaken up. One day, during his walk at the back of the manor, he saw his landlord from a distance. He remembers the day his landlord gave him a poem about Krishna and Shiva which has caused the narrator to feel accepted of being in the manor. He also recollects his mind about his meeting with Pitton, the gardener of the manor, in his second summer during his life in the manor. At first, Pitton kept a distance with the narrator, but he tried **to** make friendship with Pitton and he succeeded to do it. They often work together and have some interesting conversations. Unfortunately, in the end Pitton is forced to leave the manor. Pitton's leaving makes the narrator feel that he has lost part of his new life and comfort.

The fourth section entitled "Rooks" points out the death **of** Mr. Phillips, the caretaker of the manor. One day he suddenly collapses and is dead before the

ambulance came. From this incident, the narrator feels that he has again lost a part of the security of his second life in the valley like he has had once when Pitton left. Since the death of Mr. Phillips, who took care of the manor, there is no authority in the manor. As a result, some intruders begin to come to the manor. This makes the narrator feel unprotected. Finally, he decides to leave the cottage, but since he loves the place, he moves near there so that he can still be close to the place

In the fifth section entitled “The Ceremony of Farewell”, the narrator in his early fifties receives news that his younger sister named Sati has died because of terrible illness. Five days after her death, the narrator goes to Trinidad because Sati’s family wants him to be with them. The narrator stays on in Trinidad for the religious ceremony that takes place some days after and is complementary to the cremation. It appears to the narrator that the pundit, the person who performs the ceremony, is his first cousin. In the past, the two branches of the family that were the family of the narrator’s father and the family of the father’s brother had a little contact each other. Through the appearance of this pundit, the narrator feels that there is a wish from the pundit to assert himself among the narrator’s family. From this, the narrator finally understands that the ceremony serves as the gathering of the family, gives sanctity to the death of Sati, brings together the old and new generations, preserves history, gives a feeling of calmness to the family that is left, and a feeling to honor and remember the death person.