

"She's got the right spirit—a real multi-racial girl" (p. 113). She was raped by several unknown assailants in the riot, possibly a "multi-racial rape."

Although the novel ends on an optimistic note when the protagonist expresses his desire to return home after spending two years in England, it leaves the reader with a feeling of sadness. It is sad to see a beautiful friendship warmly cherished over many years come to an end. The narrative generates a strong feeling of nostalgia. The intense suffering Sally Yu has undergone also strikes the reader with awe and dismay. Is this brutal incident just a demonstration of the senselessness of violence or, by subjecting this "multi-racial girl" to such a cruel experience, a suggestion of the difficulties and hardship confronting an emerging multiracial, multi-cultural society? Perhaps these two elements are reflected in the title of the novel which implies a land of beauty and richness blended with potential violence and suffering.

One of the strengths of the novel lies in its skillful interpretation of the different perspectives of Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Eurasian in a complex changing situation. In addition, the indulgent life of the two university lecturers from Britain and their colonial attitudes towards the local affairs are rendered with clarity and understanding. However, the depiction of the racial riot is thin and oblique, since no attempt has been made to portray the causes underlying the violence which is the major event in the novel.

An interesting literary device of the novel is the use of extracts taken from older texts on that region and placed at suitable points of the narrative for the purpose of contrast. This may irritate a reader eagerly after the story line as it disrupts the flow of the narrative. But to a patient reader, these excerpts greatly broaden the historical perspective and shed light on the racial tensions and the social issues of the novel.

In sum, *Scorpion Orchid* is a well-written novel. As his first work of fiction, the author, a professor of English at the University of Malaya, deserves our encouragement and admiration.

Swan P. Chong

SEEPERSAD NAIPAUL
The Adventures of Gurudeva and other Stories
London: Deutsch, 1976. Pp. 200.

The Adventures of Gurudeva is a collection of one novelette and nine short stories which represent the bequest of Seepersad Naipaul, father of the well-known Trinidad novelist, V. S. Naipaul, who provides the foreword for the book. These stories, written and in some cases rewritten over a period of ten years from 1943 to 1953, are the ones that the author wished to have published as the definitive legacy of his literary endeavors. It is indeed regrettable that it took the son twenty-three years to comply with his father's wish, but it was a worthwhile wait since one must concur with V. S. Naipaul who states that Gurudeva "is a unique record of the life of the Indian or Hindu community in Trinidad in the first fifty years of the century" (p. 19).

The main thrust of the book is what may be considered, on the author's part, to be a lament on the disintegration of the customs of the rural Indian community, transplanted from India to Trinidad. In "Gurudeva" one learns that fourteen is the ideal age for a boy to enter into the usual arranged marriage. In "The Engagement" however, which was written later, "Boys are seldom married at sixteen or seventeen nowadays. Times have changed. No doubt the youngster can safely go without a wife for another two or three years" (pp. 177-78). Further, the panchayat (community tribunal) in "Gurudeva" has more significance to Gurudeva, the principal character, who is afraid of an unfavorable decision, whereas in "Panchayat," again written later, the narrative voice asks who is concerned "about ostracism in these amazingly democratic times—especially in this polyglot island of many races and many creeds? Trinidad was not India" (p. 158). Twenty-three year old and single Daisy Seetoolal, "who spoke and read English, for she had attended Mr. Sohun's school" (p. 104), and who "used brassieres that jutted out her breasts" (p. 103), offers a sharp contrast to girls like Gurudeva's wife Ratni, Dookhani of "Dookhani and Mungal," or Leela of "The Wedding Came," who never went to school and whose father felt that after "her tenth year . . . everyday that passed leaving Leela unwed meant—apart from the

opprobrium of the village—that the caverns of hell had opened so much wider, ready to engulf . . . his defaulting soul” (pp. 146-47).

Another, and more important, illustration of the erosion of the society is the fact that the “Bamboo wedding” (a traditional Hindu wedding ceremony) is no longer considered sacred. Gurudeva allays Daisy’s fears of his wife saying quite candidly: “You shouldn’t mind she. She is not me legal wife. Bamboo wedding” (p. 108).

Along with the unspoken jeremiads, Naipaul provides the reader with a wealth of the prevailing customs of the community: Jokhoo, tramp, storyteller, and matchmaker, appears in “Gurudeva” as well as in “The Wedding Came”; the basic differences (remnants of the caste system) between “India-born” and “Trinidad-born”; and the many rituals and superstitions that govern everyday living, for example, the six-fingered boy being an evil omen in “They Named him Mohun.” This exposé also furnishes an insight into man-woman relationships: women do not eat with, but rather after men; it is bad manners for a newly wed girl to laugh; and it is a man’s privilege and prerogative to beat his wife (p. 30); and finally, a male child is the best gift a woman can give to her husband.

In order to convey his message and to reveal his society, Naipaul makes use of third-person narrative throughout except in “In the Village,” where the author and narrator are one and the same, and in which first-person narrative is used. Whatever the narrative voice, this author seems unable to disguise either his personal involvement, or the fact that he is a newspaperman. All his plots are linear, and “Gurudeva,” made up of seventeen episodes, can only be considered a whole because of the continuing cast of characters. In fact, Naipaul’s presentation would classify him more as an understanding chronicler than as a consummate creative writer. His closeness to his material might account for his limited portrayal of the society at large in which he lived. He laments the incursions of the outside world but treats his own community as an isolated entity.

This very familiarity nevertheless serves him in good stead in his representation of the speech of his characters. Hindi

words punctuate the language of the speakers and their brand of English is also ably reproduced: Ramdas, speaking of his barren cow is made to say that “she will put down,” at least so the man said, “in t’ree months. Cow here six months now—and no calf” (p. 77).

In spite of its obvious limitations *Gurudeva*, not only deserves to be read, but also makes it abundantly clear that had Seepersad Naipaul lived longer and pursued the art of the narrative he might today be a worthy rival to his illustrious son, V. S. Naipaul.

Dexter J. Noël

RICHARD LLEWELLYN
At Sunrise, the Rough Music
New York: Doubleday, 1976.
Pp. 309.

A harijan (untouchable) messenger employed at the House of Commons takes an urgent message to a Cabinet Minister, whom he finds cavorting with a secretary. This Minister is also part of a smuggling network. The opening pages of Llewellyn’s novel (set in the 1970’s and published in 1976) would encourage a reader to expect a gripping political drama against the backdrop of the recent Emergency Rule in India. Other than giving one the impression that everyone at every level is matter-of-factly corrupt, there is nothing political about the novel.

The blurb on the dustcover, which is a stringing together of some popular conceptions and misconceptions about India, turns out to be even more irrelevant and misleading than usual: “It [the novel] embodies all the contrasts and conflicts of a country where seeking and questioning are set against fatalism and acceptance . . .” Though the contrasts, conflicts, seeking, etc. are nowhere in evidence, there are the usual astrologer-guru, illicit and exotic sex, and the Harijan cause, with an Indian version of Mafia thrown in for good measure.