

## ABSTRACT

Very little work has been done on Selvon's East Indian novels. He has written three major works and a few short stories which are centred in Trinidad's East Indian agricultural community. His main aim in these works is to explore the East Indian consciousness in confrontation with an alien Western environment, the bombardment and gradual encroachment on East Indian areas of Western values and life-styles, and the result of these on East Indian cultural values, behaviour and thought. However, while much of Selvon's examination is profound, his vision of East Indian society, while valid, is not complete. The development of plot is sometimes internally inconsistent as a result of his failure to view the society in its proper context. This paper compares Selvon's view of the society with actual conditions existing at the periods in which his works are set, and in so doing, pin-points how far he has strayed from the presentation of authentic East Indian experience and the result of this on the dramatic integrity of his work. The presentation and development of the themes are, to some extent, unconvincing because of his imposition on East Indians cultural patterns which are atypical. By and large, however, the cultural conflict which he portrays seems a very real dilemma.

The discussions on Indian cultural customs which have been attempted here have been derived from my own knowledge of these traditions as well as from interviews with a number of people who

were young during the 1930's and 1940's some of whom were born and living in, or acquainted with, the areas discussed in the novels. Some of these interviews have been tape-recorded. In addition, the novels, A Brighter Sun and Turn Again Tiger have been circulated among several East Indians and their views obtained.

The works considered here are the novels, A Brighter Sun and Turn Again Tiger, which have been treated together because they seem to be part of a continuous thematic development; the short stories, 'Cane Is Bitter' and 'Wartime Activities'; and the novel, The Plains of Caroni. The stories, 'Holiday in Five Rivers' and 'A Drink of Water', have been used as points of reference.