

Reflections of Cultural Interactions in V S Naipaul's Novels

¹G. Abinaya, ²S. Suresh

Research Scholar, Department of English, Kalaignar Karunanidhi Government Arts College, Tiruvannamalai
Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kalaignar Karunanidhi Government Arts College, Tiruvannamalai
Email - ¹ g.abinayaeng1993@gmail.com, ² s9443294646@gmail.com

Abstract: *V S Naipaul –diaspora writer - hardships faced by the immigrants in new geographical spaces, encountering a new culture(s) – Naipaul's novels are good examples of diaspora literature where men and women keep on engaging with the cultural otherness. Reflections of such cultural encounters are exhibited in this article.*

Key Words: *Encountering a new culture, créolisation, colonisation.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

Literature of Diaspora exhibits a rich synthesis of cultures and viewpoints giving new dimensions to diverse cultural experiences. Literature produced from nations having multiple cultures either by virtue of colonization or migration, like Caribbean islands, where experiences shared by European landlords, traders, African slaves, indentured Indian labours, besides the natives are conceived as stories. Creolization and interactions of multiple cultures gives a melange of possibilities for a writer to make a statement on colonization. V S Naipaul's novels are reflections of three cultures namely Indian, Trinidadian and English. Naipaul exercises extreme caution in providing a colourful portrait of West Indian life. Naipaul undertakes a subtle and comprehensive investigation of Trinidad's colonial predicament in his novels. Naipaul is of the belief that a person's social identity is established in a culture where he is rooted and the individual identity is determined by his personal accomplishments. However, it is critical that the individual and communal identities be fused in order to experience the entire being. According to Naipaul, true identity arises only with a stronger sense of self, which can be attained through freedom and creativity. In some ways, one is the sum of the things that one produces for oneself. Thus one can observe that Naipaul's protagonists are caught between two or more cultures facing a plethora of issues and obstacles caused by this overlapping.

2. A House for Mr. Biswas :

A House for Mr. Biswas is without doubt the best example of cross-cultural interaction exhibited by V S Naipaul. It demonstrates characters whose cultural upbringing varies giving the novel the much needed dimensions. A thorough reading of the novel reveals the tangles of intercultural interactions that fling the characters back and forth till they end up battered and damaged. The need to establish their identity through establishing deep roots in a soil, regardless of how culturally alien and odd it may be, leads individuals to experiment with numerous options typically linked with states and fixity. It also discusses the plight of Indian immigrants and their descendants in the West Indies. His discussion of this subject is thorough, illustrating why he refers to himself as a rootless creature. Ian Buruma in his "Introduction" to *A House for Mr. Biswas*, remarks that Naipaul's novels try to assert the personality of the author through the protagonists.

He has written of his own fear of extinction and his desire to leave traces in words. Very often, of course, Naipaul is his own main character. His personal story, or parts of it that matter to his theme, is repeated over and over. How he escaped from Trinidad by going to England on a scholarship; how he first became a writer; how he traced the darkness of his ancestral stories in the darkness of India; how he wrote a history of Trinidad; how he came to term with change and death. Naipaul's writing, his stories - or perhaps one should say his story - are his way of making sense of his life, of trying to find order in his world, of looking for the centre. (viii)

The preceding comment establishes a connection between the novelist and the character of Mr. Biswas. Though he is meant to be modelled after Naipaul's father, his battle to create his identity parallels Naipaul's. It is the story of an exile's quest for roots and real selfhood. His life is a constant conflict between desires and obligations, between internal drives and external circumstances. Apart from focusing on the protagonist's personal life, the novel also discusses a community's ethnic and social past. Drawing a similarity between Mr. Biswas and his creator S.P. Swain, "The Crisis of Identity: Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*," says, the life of Mr. Biswas is the life of Naipaul himself. The

experience of exile works to devalue the society that the author has deserted. In a way the novel is about the author's apprehensions of his Trinidadian life (10).

The novel chronicles a man's quest to create something worthwhile out of a limited existence. It is exemplified by the hero's fight to acquire property. Mr. Biswas is the novel's protagonist, a man in search of identity who is perpetually battling to achieve real selfhood. He embodies the aspiration of the typical lower middle class Indian to own a home and die happily under one's own roof. Naipaul's assessment of this inherited trait is exemplified tragically in his protagonist's persevering efforts to attain his ambition. While Mr. Biswas' continual strive appears to be for a home of his own, it is also a desire for a name and identity independent of others' generosity.

3. Magic Seeds :

The novel *Magic Seeds* explores the protagonist Willie's experience of marginality and borderline existence in India and England. The novel chronicles Willie's search for identity, roots and a sense of belonging. Hybridity and mimicry both play a significant role in the narrative. The novel demonstrates a reworking of Willie's earlier methods of location seeking. It is in the remaining portion of Willie's life that he discovers meaning. It is a trip through the protagonist Willie's disturbed existence in quest of roots and home.

Magic Seeds elaborates the sense of acceptance and appreciation of his own ancestors. It reflects a reworking of Willie's original perceptions of locales. While the first novel demonstrates the futility of the search for home and belonging, the second novel explores the new ways in which an individual might interact to the world and society. Willie returns to India, in *Magic Seeds*, with the intention of altering the system. Joining the revolutionaries demonstrates a positive outlook. Finally, he returns to England, where he believes multiculturalism and order will provide him with an opportunity to live in a progressive and orderly society. Thus, with *Magic Seeds*, the process of coexisting with diverse cultures and assimilating into a worldwide society comes full circle, and the concept of cultural plurality acquires new meaning and ramifications.

Willie appears to be able to integrate due to the hybridization of identities. *Magic Seeds* is a saga novel in the sense that it chronicles Willie's later life as he accepts one identity after another and bears the indignities of a culture dissolved by reform and compromise in a moment of horrific discovery. It exemplifies the novelist's extraordinary perception and uncommon innate sympathy for the wretched and miserable. Naipaul achieves a breathtakingly dismal eloquence by vividly evoking the half-built visions that haunt the liminal spaces of forest, hotel room, prison cell, and airport lounge.

Naipaul's reserves have not been depleted, and his writings present us with a new perspective, a new tone, and a thorough understanding of contemporary cultural and political events. *Magic Seeds* has garnered the critical acclaim it deserves. As with *Half a Life*, it represents a clear shift from his previous position. It is a reflection of economic and cultural dimensions of globalisation, in contrast to Naipaul's earlier novels, which were stories of post colonialism. Naipaul appears to be implying that it is rarely, if ever, appropriate to examine the world through an idealised lens. Thus, this story concludes with a didactic remark that serves as both a cautionary tale about the dangers of utopianism and a crystallisation of his fundamentally conservative worldview.

4. CONCLUSION :

Naipaul's novels focus on the conflict between the human will for a distinct identity and the compelling will of his culture. In a country like West Indies, a nation which is a desert spiritually, devoid of significant progress, reduces people to insignificance robbing them of their autonomy. Naipaul analyses this process of creating a new culture through a recurring theme of individuals who are failures due to their fundamental inability to express. He also recognises that their entire creative potential is extremely suggestive of the colonial retardation that appears to plague the writer's milieu, as expressed in Naipaulian formula: "Ought ought's are ought, ought twos are ought". Naipaul takes a positive approach to the issue of alienation, exile, and displacement. He depicts his characters' unflinching struggle against the forces that seek to tame their uniqueness. As a third-generation immigrant, he has embraced reality and thinks himself to be the product of multiple cultures

REFERENCES:

Primary Sources

- Naipaul, V.S. *Half a Life*. Picador, 2002.
---. *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Picador, 2003.
---. *Magic Seeds*. Picador, 2004.

Secondary Sources

- Buruma, Ian. Ed *A House for Mr Biswas*. Penguin, 1993.
Rao, Champa Mohan. *Postcolonial Situation in the Novels of V.S. Naipaul*. Atlantic, 2004.
Sangma, Ramona M. *Cultural Conflict in V.S. Naipaul's Indian Trilogy*. Author Press, 2013.