

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

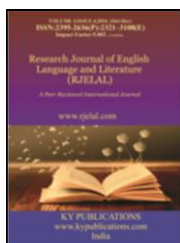
2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

HYBRIDITY AND MIMICRY IN V S NAIPAUL'S NOVELS *A HOUSE FOR MR BISWAS*,
THE ENIGMA OF ARRIVAL & *HALF A LIFE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to probe into the cross cultural issues occurred due to Diaspora in the writings of V S Naipaul . It highlights the concept of hybridity , mimicry, nostalgia for a lost home, disillusionment of expatriation, fragmentation of the self, exuberance of immigration, assimilation, cultural translation and negotiation through the selected novels of the writer.It examines the feelings of rootlessness and alienation. The term hybridity has become very popular in postcolonial cultural criticism. Diasporas try their best at first to keep their own identity in their own community. But outside of community, their social identity is lost due to their migration from their homeland to adopted country. His novels deal with problematic intercultural relations and hyphenated identities the female characters in their novels count the benefits of gaining privacy, freedom, egalitarianism against the cost of losing the extended family spirituality tradition and status.

Key Words: Rootlessness, Multiculturalism, Hybridity, Post colonialism, Displacement.

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This paper maps out the Problems of the Indian expatriates and immigrants and brings in light their diasporic experience, feeling of rootlessness and process of hybridization in the hostlands. The analysis is of migration experience and life style of Indians in foreign land and this experience is constituted in migration, partition, resettlement and socio-economic assimilations. For diasporic writers, one of the most important themes of their writing is the nostalgia for ancestral home and sense of homelessness with rootlessness. Some writers regret for loss of their homeland while others take it positively by having expanded view of human experience and interaction with and inclusion of diverse cultures. In this research paper I have focused at V S Naipaul's three novels: Novels *A*

House For Mr Biswas(1961),The Enigma Of Arrival (1987) & Half a life(2001) .

Postcolonial writers attempt to show hybridity as an anti-colonial tool regarding identity, culture and language, because in hybridity, 'the sense of mixing', breaks down the strict polarization of imperialism. They regard hybridity as the mutual trans-culturation of the colonizers and colonized culture, but the celebration of hybridity generally refers to the establishing of colonized culture. As Leela Gandhi says, 'The West remains the privileged meeting ground for all ostensibly cross-cultural conversations' (1998: 136). Hybridity by its assimilating policies negates the imbalance and inequality of the power relations and masks cultural differences. 'There is, however, nothing in the idea of hybridity as such that suggests that mutuality

negates the hierarchical nature of the imperial process that it involves the idea of an equal exchange' (Ashcroft et al 2004: 119).

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity in recent post-colonial studies is the most influential and controversial. According to Bhabha, colonial identity is always a matter of agony. Like Fanon, Bhabha suggests that hybridity is the necessary attribute of 'colonial condition'. For Fanon, the colonized subjects fall in psychic trauma when they realize that they can never attain the whiteness that they have been taught to desire.

Mimicry or repetition is now a more active force connected to hybridity. In post colonial societies evolving out of slavery and exploitation, where there is no mutual trans-culturization possible, hybridity is often reduced to mimicry. Mimicry is a strategy of colonial power and knowledge. Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as "o subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite". When colonial discourse encourages the colonized subject to 'mimic' the colonizer, by adopting the colonizers cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather the result is a blurred copy of the colonizer that can be quite threatening (Ashcroft et al 2004: 139). As Bhabha says, "hybridity is the introduction of cultural relativism or synthesized position resolving the dialectic of two cultures but a return of the content and form of colonial authority that 'terrorizes' authority with the ruse of recognition , its mimicry , its mockery". Mimicry, therefore, describes the ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The ambivalence of two powers describes the fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery. Mimicry is ambivalent, because it requires a similarity and dissimilarity.

The landscape of contemporary literature has been transformed by the rising tide of globalization; texts are now crossing the borders of nations and cultures as newly emerging authors express myriad voices of those once considered the subaltern. Diasporic literature produced by the writers of Indian diaspora exposes problems and

diasporic life. Writers like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohinton Mistry, Chitra Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, Meena Alexander and many others have tried to present India not of present time but the time they had spent in their native land. They present India of their imagination, its history, identity, culture and religious notions. This paper is an attempt to highlight the love and attachment of the diasporic writers to their 'homeland' even after many years of resettlement. The nostalgia present in their life finds full way through their writings. Nobel Prize-winning British writer V S Naipaul presents such feelings in his novels and highlights the recreation of the India through his imagination.

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (born 17 August 1932) was born and raised in Trinidad, to which his grandfathers had emigrated from India as indentured servants. He is known for the wistfully comic early novels of Trinidad, the bleaker novels of a wider world remade by the passage of peoples, and the V.S. Naipaul stands tall amongst all Indian Diasporic writers. He seems to epitomize the term 'Indian Diaspora'. His grandparents were part of those indentured labourers, who were sent to serve as plantation workers in the far off lands during the rule of British Empire. Though he was born in the small town of Chaguanas on the island of Trinidad, for a long time now he lives in England, an act of self-imposed exile on his part. The sense of 'Homelessness' comes naturally to him and it is the main thing with which most of his writing is concerned. In 1961 he published one of his most acclaimed novels, *A House for Mr. Biswas*. His novels include *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) – film version: *The Mystic Masseur* (2001), *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958), *Miguel Street* (1959), *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963), *The Mimic Men* (1967), *A Flag on the Island* (1967), *In a Free State* (1971) – Booker Prize *Guerrillas* (1975), *A Bend in the River* (1979), *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), *A Way in the World* (1994), *Half a Life* (2001), *The Nightwatchman's Occurrence Book: And Other Comic Inventions* (Stories) – (2002) and *Magic Seeds* (2004).

V.S. Naipaul changed the way the fiction is understood and written, without qualification. As he has said so well,

"The books have to look after themselves, and they will be around as long as people find that they are illuminating".

His books will certainly look after themselves, taking on the personified life of text living on outside and apart from their author. Naipaul is, foremost, an ascetic writer, dedicated to see the world clearly and without sentimentality. He has often said, "Good writers have always looked for truth" Naipaul, allegedly, remains free to animate the outdated diction of Imperial-empire. Joseph Epstein writes, 'It may be that among living writers only Naipaul is able to speak of 'barbarian peoples'; only he can say things that... in the mouths of others would straight away be declared racism' (cited in Nixon, 118). Nixon would argue, Naipaul's literary success in England, especially through the 1970's, accrues, in part, from his racially secured license to condemn the third-world. But Said, vetoes Naipaul from the postcolonial counter canon, and coins him as the most shameful variety of eurocentricism. He writes of him as a 'third-worlder' denouncing his own people, not because they are victims of imperialism, but because they have an innate flaw, which is that they are not English.

Naipaul sarcastically presents the complete picture of hybridization and the disintegration of religious values in the novel *A House for Mr Biswas*. The younger Tulsī son, Owad worships the Hindu deities though he wears cross, an emblem of Christian faith. The observance of the holy rituals has been diluted with hybridization, hypocrisy and superstitions. The family Hindu deity 'Hanuman' seems to be replaced by Christ. Another mark of hybridization is, it crumbles the solidarity and unity of Tulsī joint family and disintegrates it into nuclear families.

Naipaul's the autobiographical novel, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), which portrays the cultural trauma of an immigrant from Trinidad, especially in England but also in New York by referring to the enigma the novelist himself experienced when he immigrated from Trinidad to England. The character's dilemma due to his

Trinidadian background in English culture clearly shows the author's inner conflict because of his hybridity. In this sense, the influence of Naipaul's own Trinidadian background and education in England upon the protagonist in his novel is obvious. *The Enigma of Arrival* reflects the condition of the immigrants suffering from cultural shock, hybridity fragmentation and mimicry. The novel portrays the desperate condition of an author doing his best to create his work in the post-war west, in London and New York, trying to overcome his hybridity and adaptation problems due to his cultural background.

In *Half a Life* Naipaul masterfully manipulates the protagonist Willie Somerset Chandran's colonial predicament, his anxiety and dislocation. The novel depicts the mimic and hybrid identity of Willie Somerset Chandran. Willie Chandran, his parental family, his sister, Sarojini have been damaged, displaced and marginalized by decolonization. Everywhere Willie Chandran looks, he sees dishonesty even for his previous generation. When Willie's father expresses his regret about the problems that ended in forcing him to be a school dropout: I should have said, "I burnt my books long ago. I am following the mahatma's call. I am boycotting English education." But I was too weak. At a critical moment I failed myself. All I said was, "I felt all my strength oozing out of me in the examination room." And I could have cried at my weakness. (Half a Life, 15)

For the sake of these problems that finally end to mimicry, Willie's involvement in the guerrilla movement is ultimately dissatisfying, confirming that promised utopias of London do not offer chances to create a new uncorrupted society, but are rather spoiled from the outset by the history that has gone before. The guerrilla leaders' ideas are not original or tailored to their situation but borrowed phrases from other revolutions in other colonized places. Nothing new is created; their efforts are contaminated by the past with no hope to improving future.

Naipaul's novels record exiled life, hybridity and manifests the ruptures among subjectivity, geography, and language toward multicultural and fluid identity.

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