

Displacement Of Culture In The Writing Of V.S.Naipaul

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Abstract

Literature is the fundamental expression, feelings and emotion of the life. V.S.Naipaul is known a mouthpiece of displacement, rootlessness, alienation and exile. This identity breeds due to his immigrant background. He is an expatriate by choice who chooses to alienate him from the countries, cultural identities and communities within which he moves. He is the man for whom every country is, even his native one, and the entire world is, a distant land.

This paper focused on his postcolonial experiences. Naipaul displays three striking features that separate the protagonist in each of the writing. All his writings are about individual standard in foreign countries and its culture. All his works extend Naipaul 's ideas on rootlessness, dependency and the paradox of personal freedom. These reflect self-exile and previously a colonial dilemma becomes a universal condition.

Keywords: culture, displacement, communities, immigrant, alienation, exile.

Introduction

V.S.Naipaul is one of the most important writers of the literary Diaspora. He is the seventh Indian who awarded Nobel Prize in 1971 and second for literature in 2001. V.S.Naipaul was born in Chaguanas near Port of Spain Trinidad in 17 August, 1932 in an Indian Brahmin family. His grandparents migrated from India in the 1880s to work as farm labourers. He adopted the vocation of a writer from his father. His works reflects various aspect and cultures, social, political, religious, and personal belief system. His works shows a deep concern for the cultures of the colonized countries, socio political and cultural history of India and economic condition. V.S.Naipaul belongs as a Caribbean (Trinidad) by birth and India by heritage, a downright colonial by culture. He never felt belongingness to any of the above cultures- Trinidad, India or Britain, a strong feeling of rootlessness. His writings are

set in various cultures prominent among them are Trinidad, India and Britain, American, African and the Third World. Most of his early works have been instrumental in placing the society of Trinidad. Mohit K. Ray in Preface to V.S.Naipaul: Critical Essays gives:-

“Naipaul is one of the literature’s travellers and his leading theme of rootlessness the alienating effects of colonial past on today’s postcolonial people taken him to Africa, South America, India and all over the world- not in search of roots but in search of rootlessness” (V.S.Naipaul: Critical Essays)

As a collection of two stories and a novella *In a Free State* framed by a journalistic prologue and epilogue. *In a Free State* (1971) is concerned with the collection of postcolonial short-stories. The book displays three striking features that separate the protagonist in each tale- “One out of Many” “Tell me who to kill” and the title story “In a Free state”. The work is symphonic with different movements working towards an overriding them.

In “One out of many” explores the traumatic cultural adjustment forced upon an Indian servant when he is uprooted from the pavements of Bombay by his diplomatic employer and taken off to a new life in Washington D.C., where he finds a niche for himself. But remains profoundly alienated from the world around him. He became a pathetic figure in an alien culture, thinking that the place is unsafe and full of worries. He realises his own identity for his native culture. He terrified by the tension of freedom and identity which exile imposes on him and since his life is filled with anxiety, alienation and deeper sense of displacement. He is also nostalgic for his Bombay life where he had been respected and had enjoyed a certain position. The title “One out of Many” signifies the loss of one’s own identity and thus becoming a part of crowd or one out of many. In this displacement of Santosh like many others is bound to follow the dictates of the face and make sad compromise in a desperate and taking a decision to leave one’s home culture and comfort, the transition to a new world. This displacement not only destroys his painful idealism but also raises important question about identity cultural and personal. The opening lines of the story narrate- “I AM NOW an American citizen and I live in Washington, capital of the world .both here and India, will feel that I have done well. But.....”

“In a Free State” Santosh suffer severely due to low value of currency over there. He lives in almost a cupboard and inadvertently blows several weeks salary just buying a snack. He is shown highly concerned about pocket: “But I had been thinking in rupees and paying in dollars. In less than an hour I had spent nine days ‘pay’ (26). He has a sinking feeling of suffocation and artificiality. Everything he finds unreal and sorrowful. Artificially and make-believe world are part of his life in the Washington.

“The illuminated ceiling was decorated with stars of different sizes: the colours were grey and blue and gold. Below the imitation sky, I felt like a prisoner”.

It is natural that these displaced people, uprooted from their real homes, should find themselves alienated in the alien land.

“Displaced from their real homes and transported to distant lands, they experience a totally. ‘Negative sense of place’. They are unable to poses in the spiritual sense the land they have in the physical sense.”

Santosh gets to meet a restaurant proprietor, who offers him an apparent fortune as a salary, so he absconds and works for him. He starts to live in fear that his master will find him and order him back. He also learns that he is working illegally and liable to deportation. He feels burdened by his secrets. He has only way of resolving the situation is to marry a Negro woman who had seduced him. It’s a simply a story of Santosh, his displacement, what he finds and does not find, in America. It is akin to the life of many illegals immigrants sneaking into foreign countries, facing innumerable hassles. The author underlines the fact that everything is in disarray or Free State where individuals are mere numbers or ‘one out of many’. We find that the work is beautiful portrayal of displacement of culture from own country to another country.

In *Tell me who to kill* has an unreliable narrator, belongs to a rural West Indian family a set of cousins, one of whom being in a better situation manages to humiliate the narrator. The richer family has a son who goes to Canada and is destined to do well. In the second family it is a tragic story of an unnamed West Indian scapegrace brother Dayo to London. In this story portrays the miserable predicament of the East Indian narrator in West Indies background. The narrator concentrates on his brother Dayo and somehow manages to send him to England to study aeronautical engineering. His elder brother does all he can to support him. But his Brother in London not studies, he simply wasting time. His future makes him shattered .dissociated and lost even he loses control and all sense of direction and suffers from the displaced and alienate predicament. His elder brother wants to see him a professional. He is waiting to sacrifice his own comforts for his happiness. “I don’t care about myself. I have no life”. (51) Ordinary for me but for my brother it was not going to be like that. (60) Dayo drifts away from his brother and marriage an English girl and lives in England. Dayo has done worse by leaving and losing him. He cannot bear to return home after his failure and hence sends back message that he is dead. His neurosis is the effect of alienation and disillusionment in displaced position in London with which he just could not cope with. Dayo’s story can be seen as a debased version of Naipaul own life: the studies in England to escape the cultural deprivation of Caribbean life, the cinematic fantasies which are drawn from the author’s own Trinidadian childhood. Helen Heywood writes about the experience of protagonists from southern countries:-

“They portray an anxiety to arrive mingled with a fear of arrival the threat which attaches to be unfamiliar place; agoraphobia and the dereliction of displacement”. In this title says who can be killing to avenge him for these lose? Brother has exploited brother. So in this

displacement his brother loses his cultures and identify. It's a heartbreaking story about how disillusionment can lead to despair, to bitterness and to hatred.

A Free State about the newly independent African country. Where two of the local tribes i.e. Fleming and Walloons, are at war against each other. The opening of the story is thus "In this country in Africa there was a king. They belonged to different tribes. The enmity of the tribes was old, and with independence their anxieties about another became acute. The king and the president intrigued with the local representatives of white government".

The theme is about expatriate British citizens; Bobby and Linda visited state of African Great Lakes. They have come into possession of the public but affected by furious civil violence. Bobby and Linda destined to be the pray of civil war there as they considered the heirs of colonizers. In this story the characters are as Linda Anderson has declared: -

"People who have abandoned their native lands and live in places where they are no longer in accord with their surroundings. They are casualties of freedom because they are suspended between these two states unable to cope with self knowledge, yet no longer innocent."

In this describes the rapid deterioration that occurred in Africa after colonial rule ended. This Free State has been decolonized, and yet not all that much has changed. Attitudes and mentalities remain the same.

Naipaul first book an area of darkness on India, was the outcome of his first encounter with India. With harsh realities of India. Its distress and pain affected. In this work Naipaul traces the progress of his grandfather's migration from India to Trinidad where he recreated a simulacrum in miniature of his lost India n world. In an area of darkness describe the gradual contraction and disruption of the seemingly complete world of Trinidad's India.

"It was a country from which my grandfather came a country

Never physically described and therefore never real . A

Country out in the void beyond the dot of Trinidad"

(Naipaul 1964:29)

Naipaul shares the same condition and situation as that of the Indian repatriates from West Indies, who flocked to India only to discover that they no longer 'belonged' to this place. Which they had accepted as their home unknowingly. They see them as symbols of the rootlessness of the Trinidad Hindu community (Naipaul 1984:61)

In these sense of alienation that Trinidad is atypically represented as homeland, which is measured his distance from India. He represents himself as better able to comprehend the state of Indian society than Indian themselves are

I had learnt my separateness from India, and was content
to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors''

(Naipaul 1964:266)

Naipaul writes that he is a vestigial Hindu, he is able to enter into Hindu habits of thought.

Naipaul presents India's modernity as purely superficial and recommends the application of western methods of inquiry and assessment to the Indian situation. These form the basis of the contrast between Indian and Western thought he wishes to establish. Indians are accused of a 'craze for foreign'.

(Naipaul 1964:90)

The West Indian and Indian displacement on the cultural basis implies Naipaul's intellectual rejection of Indian ways and morals. In quest of his identity and his roots, Naipaul as a constant traveller writer and he always search of his own identity. Naipaul journey to India is comes to terms with his own homelessness. "I had learned my separateness from India". "He observes in an area of darkness and was content to be a colonial without a past, without ancestors". Displacement may be inevitable for Naipaul but he firmly attached to his roots.

Trinidad, the land of his birth and India, the land of his ancestors. Naipaul's writing on India, is his personal perception of India, which has been portrait through his variant experiences in Trinidad. He also describes the interaction with the Indian communities in the West Indies, the cultural inheritance in his grandmother's house .Naipaul always anxieties for his own identity and selfhood. Naipaul's idea and vision of India was the Hindu India of the West Indies in which he was born and brought up. Naipaul's grandmother's house is provided the first link with Hindu self and India of his ancestors. He also described to Hindu India of his father's stories, which epitomised for him unity of old world. But Naipaul's grandfather as well as Indian in the West Indies used to hear fairy tales of India as a golden and enchanted land, full of prosperity and purity. Naipaul confess

"To be an Indian in England was distinctive, in Egypt it was
distinctive, in Egypt it was more so. Now in Bombay I entered
a shop or a restaurant and awaited a special response and there
was nothing. It was like being denied part of my reality. Again and
again I was caught , I was faceless. In might sink without a trace
into that Indian crowd. I had been made by Trinidad and
England recognition of my differences was necessary to me.

I felt the need to impose myself and didn't know how.

(Naipaul 1990)

So, as a child Naipaul grew up in India and as gradually grew up in West Indies.

Here marked is Naipaul observance of a chasm between two worlds ;one was Colonial world and Trinidad his birth place and other was the Indian Hindu world, the land of his ancestors.

Naipaul never felt rooted in Trinidad, Naipaul as a diasporic migrant with an exile self, Naipaul's land in India, he encounters the realities of India, what gets yielded is frustration and hopelessness, he attempts at releasing through this book.

Naipaul another book gives you an insight into the southern way of life. It is difficult for people up outside of this region to understand the culture, subculture and counterculture. Naipaul encounters with locals and people's experiences into a grand painting of the south. Some backdrop to newer political movement in the United States. *A Turn in the South* suggests a culture shift Naipaul is tracking, for better or worse, in the south land. When Naipaul visit the American south he travelled from state to state or rather from community to community. After visit he found that racism was less than defining episteme of southern culture and than a pervasive devotion to mythology. Naipaul perception of a south wallowing in self mythology,a culture that abounds in self consciousness without ever achieving relativism.

The often pulls back and likens the southern experience to that of his native Caribbean, he's justify famous for describing culture in India, Africa and Trinidad and these feels more like and attempt to broaden his palette than say something new.

In *A Turn in the South* (1989)Naipaul describes journey through the deep south of America. This visit of south American countries and it embodies a revision of his old idea about that country. In this he narrate of his serious probing into the nature of civilization. He inquires about the resistance of south America to modernization. He says about south America how the southern black people have learnt to adopt to the sweeping changes that have been coming over the country. His work reflect the black people who have with the white white people together they writes :

“Black people, there, black people there,
White people there, black people, white people.
All this side black people, all this side white
People. White people, white people, black
People, white people”.

In this book Naipaul himself forms a prominent figure, and his approach to the native people. In this work Naipaul stylistically removed his own identity and describes his own activities like a journalistic reporting. *A Turn in the South* represent Naipaul's approach to travel narrative. Naipaul examined the cultures of Caribbean, India, Africa, and other Islamic culture.

Naipaul's other book "*Among the Believers*" seems to be open out new territories for his writings. This book is account of journey, to Muslim state, so it is subtitled as an Islamic journey. In this Naipaul obsessed with his idea, education, technology, cultural remarks in an ironical way to the Iranian way of life. The journey of Islamic countries came to him during Iranian revolution. This travelogue had given him an opportunity to place and his Western prejudice against the alternative culture, religion, political ideologies, offered by Islamic fundamentalism. Naipaul write its sequel named beyond belief. In this Naipaul's two books western audience has been satisfied by Naipaul's two books on Islam in which he turns culture as the major tool for determining authenticity of Islamic belief in these four countries.

In an interview published in news week international (august 18,1980) he spoke about a book was writing on "Islam" and then volunteered that

"muslim fundamentalism has no intellectual
Substance to it, therefore it must collapse"

(among the believer's :an Islamic journey)(81)

Naipaul appears to have taken the view that Islamic enjoys the benefits of universal civilization while retreating from rationality into faith. He write in *Among the behaviour's*.

" the life that had come to Islam had not come from

Within. It had came from outside events and

Circumstances the spread of the universal civilization.(398)

He says Islam as a 'fearfully enlarged and retarded depended' of the west which is the world of knowledge, criticism, technical know how and functioning institutions.

Naipaul becomes western in spite of his personal displacement and colonial rooted in India, transplanted to the Caribbean Island. He doesn't describe authenticity in the native worlds and makes western assumption in the remedy of India and Indian Muslims. It seems that those who read Naipaul without a knowledge of Indian history will not understand that there lived a great ruler like Akbar and there existed socio philosophical movement like Sufism in India

Conclusion

Almost all of the V.S.Naipaul's works whether fictional or Non-fictional deal with culture, identity and roots. Because he undergoes through a lots of up's and downs to assert his own identity. He could not adjust himself to a country. He himself says; -

“Living in a borrowed culture, the West Indian, more than most needs writers to tell him who he is and where he stands”

The character of his novel and exposition of the cultural displacement because his rootlessness and belongingness. Naipaul is the master of portray the character's inner self and situation in which he is caught. *In a Free State* Naipaul precedes to explore the ironies of the description of a cross-country drive by the expatriate narrators. In this book about unhappy journey made by the exiles coming from different countries and cultures and all the experiencing the pangs of rootlessness, displacement, and homelessness. In this short story is one of the best works of fiction deals with the subject of cultural displacement. Naipaul's use of multiple stories helps him present a more balanced perspective than a straightforward novel. All the three stories focused sharply on torments of those who have hooked into the cultural displacement. All stories are about individual stranded in foreign countries and confronted by alien culture. In this short stories Naipaul very much discussed cultural displacement, immigration, suppression, belongingness, rootlessness, economic failure, imbalanced individual personality and also deal with alienation and often difficult relationship between different cultures.

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