

**MULTICULTURALISM, DIASPORIC  
IDENTIFICATION AND CULTURAL  
HYBRIDITY IN THE WORKS OF V.S.  
NAIPAUL**

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
BHARATI VIDYAPEETH DEEMED UNIVERSITY, PUNE  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN ENGLISH**

**BY  
RACHNA SAINI**

**UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF  
DR. NISHAMANI KAR**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
BHARATI VIDYAPEETH UNIVERSITY**

**PUNE, 411030  
INDIA**

**April 2012**

# CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**MULTICULTURALISM, DIASPORIC IDENTIFICATION AND CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN THE WORKS OF V.S. NAIPAUL**” submitted by Rachna Saini for the award of the degree of doctor of Philosophy in English, is a record of a genuine and bonafide research work carried out under my guidance and supervision.

This is to further certify that, to the best of my knowledge, no part of the thesis has been submitted to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma. All the references and information collected from various sources in preparing this thesis have been duly acknowledged by him.

I find that the research work is adequate and satisfactory for the purpose of acceptance as per requirements for the award of the Ph D degree.

Pune **Dr Nishamani Kar**

Date:

**Research Guide**

# DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “**MULTICULTURALISM, DIASPORIC IDENTIFICATION AND CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN THE WORKS OF V.S. NAIPAUL**” being submitted to faculty of English, Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University, for fulfilment of research for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH under the guidance and supervision of Dr Nishamani Kar, Associate Professor in the Department of English, NDA, Khadakwasla, Pune.

The present work is based on my reading and analysis of the original texts and has not been submitted to any university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

Place: Pune     **RACHNA SAINI**

Date: Research Scholar

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

(Thanking people is thanking God)

This study is the result of generosity of people who let me find my way in the light of their knowledge, those who have been kind enough to share their knowledge with me and thus improve my understanding through this study.

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to my respectable supervisor **Dr. NishamaniKar**, Associate Professor of English, National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Pune, for his encouragement, guidance, patience and support during my research at BharatiVidyapeeth University. His invaluable guidance with insightful suggestions had a crucial influence in all stages of this work.

I am thankful to **Dr. R.S.Zirange**, HoD English, Y M College, for giving me the opportunity to share his knowledge in course of this arduous task.

I warmly thank my friends and comrades who have been a continuous source of inspiration and have been enlightening me with positive attitude and have taught me that there is no substitute to hard work, who were always concerned about my progress in research.

I am grateful to **Prof. S. B. Gokhale**, Professor of English, Pune University and Referee of the Research Committee, BharatiVidyapeeth University. He had been patient during all my presentations, and his support to me has been steadfast. I thank him for his valuable hints and suggestions.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my family, my father though he is no longer with us, my mother, who has always encouraged all her children for higher education, and my brothers for their support, encouragement, and patience.

March, 2011

RachnaSaini

## CONTENTS

Certificate	i
Declaration	ii

Acknowledgement	iii
Contents	iv
Abbreviations	vii
Abstract	viii

## **I. Introduction 1-40**

- 1.1 Life and Works of V.S. Naipaul
- 1.2 Diasporic Identification
- 1.3 Migration as one of the major elements of diaspora
- 1.4 Multiculturalism
- 1.5 Cultural Hybridity
- 1.6 Aim and Scope of the Study
  - 1.6.1 Review of Literature
  - 1.6.2 Plan of the Study
  - 1.6.3 Sources
    - 1.6.3 (i) Primary Sources
    - 1.6.3(ii) Secondary Sources

## **II. V.S. Naipaul: The Man and the Author 41-94**

- 2.1 Sense of Alienation
- 2.2 Sense of History
- 2.3 Sense of Exile
- 2.4 Postcolonial Empowerment
- 2.5 Colonialism, Capitalism and Apocalypse
- 2.6 The Limits of Colonial Desire

2.7 Homelessness

2.8 History and the Void of History

### **III. Multiculturalism and Cultural Hybridity 95-140**

3.1 Post colonialism in the Fiction of V.S.Naipaul

3.2 Cultural Hybridity and Construction of Subjectivity:

V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life*

3.3 Post-colonial Discourse on Identity and Place

### **IV. Sense of Alienation and Rootlessness 141-195**

4.1 Marx's theory of alienation

4.2 The Empty Self

4.3 Relationships as Broken Mirrors

4.4 A World without a Centre

4.5 Healing the Wounds of Imperialism

4.6 Corruption Corrupts Utterly

### **V. Home Away from Home: Expatriate Feeling 196-238**

5.1 Naipaul: A Stateless Traveller

5.2 The Inevitable Social Transition

5.3 The Migrant Population

5.4 The Discourse Community

5.5 The Globalised Self

5.6 Mock-Biography of a Society

## **VI. Diasporic Identification 239-299**

6.1 Nostalgia, Memory and Imaginary Homelands

6.2 'Home' and the Poetics of 'Return'

6.3 Dislocation, Re-location, Memo-Realization

6.4 The Hybridities are a cause of New Identities

6.5 Cultural Fundamentalisms and Ethnic Assertion

6.6 Globalization and Cosmopolitanism

6.7 Transnational Solidarity and Ethics

## **VII. Conclusion 300-309**

### **Select Bibliography 310-322**

#### **Abbreviations**

- *A House for Mr Biswas:* HB
- *Guerrillas*G
- *The Mimic Men:* MM
- *A Bend in the River:* BR
- *Half a Life:* HL
- *The Suffrage of Elivira*SE

## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis we have taken a modest attempt at reading V S Naipaul's major works, which are invariably based on the decolonised, decentred or even multi-centred geographies. We have examined the ways and means through which Naipaul's creative oeuvre is engaged in exploring the sense of displacement and marginalization generated by the imperial mappings of the colonial space. The texts, considered for analysis, contribute to the decentralizing tendencies of postcolonialism by deconstructing the tropes of boundaries from the perspective of those who have been marginalized on the basis of their race, gender or geographical origin. We have been adequately careful to identify the nuances as to how the displaced subjects relate to places in the postcolonial context.

Naipaul's longing for a space is examined in this study in relation to the situational complexity, he faced in his life. His view of life in terms of the binary opposition between the colonial and native spaces is discussed on the basis of the sense of displacement generated by his upbringing. We have taken effort to drive home the point that the writers like Naipaul contribute to the decentralizing mission of postcolonialism by locating themselves in the margins and advocating sensitivity towards the tropes of boundaries that subject people to displacement and marginalization. We have taken Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*, *The Mimic Men*, *The Suffrage of Elivira*, *A Bend in the River* and *Half a Life* for a focused study.

The longing for a home, for an identity, is an unlikely quest for a displaced subject, and that the imperative of the postcolonial world requires the displaced to see the world as a safe place to live in. Naipaul through his creative engagement reminds us of the increasing necessity, complexity as well, of moving towards a decentralised and dynamic view of the world. Taking into consideration Homi Bhabha's notion of unhomeliness and Melvin Seeman's influential five-fold classification of the theme of alienation, and other theories on diasporic identity, it has been established that Naipaul is one of the postcolonial writers, who has been trying to lead the people of once-colonized cultures to overcome the problems they have been entangled in. Evidently, he has identified the sense of alienation in the psyches of once colonised people in the form of normlessness (one of Melvin Seeman's fivefold classification of the concept of alienation), and then in the form of what Hegel terms: "alienation as separation". The shreds of this volition need to be analysed in a multicultural setting.

Multiculturalism as a paradigm is said to be realised by accounting for the migrant's cultural differences on the throes of globalisation. No matter which view of multiculturalism as a situational complex one takes, it seems beyond dispute that a truly multicultural



perspective cannot but acknowledge migration as a move with far-reaching consequences for the host societies and, often more drastically, for the individual migrants, as well. Arguably, one of the most pressing problems for those forsaking their homes for a new country is the construction of a new identity. In more accessible terms, the central concern for many who feel themselves uprooted is how to make life in the diaspora 'livable'. In the process we cannot lose sight of the concerted effort to reproduce the old country in the new setting. It might also imply in some cases that the country of origin is happily discarded in favour of the country of adoption. The implications of what 'livable' entails are negotiated along a spectrum of possibilities ranging from assimilation to a new culture and also to the retention of the old. Putting differently, along a continuum of sameness to difference, the Trinidadians present a case of meaningful analysis. Naipaul tells the readers the story of such an assimilation and resistance, a sort of approach-avoidance conflict. In this context, the colonial situation in the Caribbean setting also provides us a leading edge.

Colonialism, eventually, refers to the control of one power over a dependent area or people. The developing world, especially Trinidad, Naipaul's home, and India, the home of his ancestors is the point of concern here. The novels chosen for analysis do more or less capture the nuances of the colonial experience. For example, in *A House for Mr Biswas*, the Tulsis represent the mother country, Great Britain, which strictly controlled the colony's daily life and development. Mr. Biswas represents the colonized. He is economically and psychologically dependent on Mrs. Tulsi (whom he calls the old queen, perhaps recalling the height of British colonialism under Queen Victoria). He struggles for independence and freedom, though his progress is slow and difficult. Like many former colonists, Mr. Biswas has not had the opportunity to learn the skills needed to manage in an independent society. His attempt to run the store at 'The Chase' is a disaster, and he is ill-suited to oversee the sugarcane workers. Even his self-identity has been jumbled and his traditional roots obscured; he does not know the location of the house he lived in, as a boy. While it may be seen as a representation of colonialism, the novel speaks many other things like: alienation, search for identity, hybridity and mimicking. It may also be viewed as a personalized account of the experiences of thousands of Indian immigrants in Trinidad. The novel can be read on several different levels. Mr. Biswas spent much of his life rebelling against his family, his ethnic and religious community, and his society. This lends support to the idea that all Diasporas are unhappy, and every diaspora is unhappy in its own way.

Diasporas refer to people who do not feel comfortable with their non-hyphenated identities as indicated on their passports. Diasporas are people who would want to explore the

meaning of the hyphen, but perhaps not press the hyphen too far for fear that this would lead to massive communal schizophrenia. They are precariously lodged within an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self-imposed sense of exile. They are haunted by spectres, by ghosts arising from within that encourage separatist movements. Diasporas are both celebrated (by late/post modernity) and maligned (by early modernity). But we need to be a little cautious, a little wary of either position. Celebrating Diasporas as the exemplary condition of late modernity – Diasporas as highly democratic communities for whom domination and territoriality are not the preconditions of “nationhood” – is not an uncommon refrain. Nevertheless, diasporic communities are said to occupy a border zone where the most vibrant kinds of interaction take place; where ethnicity and nation are kept separate. To stretch the argument further, Diasporas are fluid social formations happy to stand for a longer, much admired, historical process.

On the basis of all these, we have endeavoured to evaluate the historical and social underpinnings of Indo-Caribbean literature. We have also tried our best to establish the truth that Naipaul, while exploring the socio-political and cultural conditions of the contemporary world, focuses on dislocation of an individual or a race leading to a sense of loss, and also rediscovery. Eventually, life consists not in losing, but rediscovering one’s self.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **CHAPTER II**

**V.S. Naipaul: The Man and the Author**

## **CHAPTER III**

**Multiculturalism and Cultural Hybridity**

## **CHAPTER IV**

**Sense of Alienation and Rootlessness**

## **CHAPTER V**

**Home Away from Home: Expatriate**

**Feeling**

# **CHAPTER VI**

**Diasporic Identification**

# **CHAPTER VII**

**CONCLUSION**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**