

THE REPRESENTATION OF DIASPORA IN V. S. NAIPAUL'S A BEND IN THE RIVER

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the important theme of the diaspora in V.S. Naipaul's fiction and to explore the real status of diasporic people. It also analyses migration as a part of the broader change and transnational networks and linkages between Indian diaspora and diasporic communities. It is narrated very apt in the novels of V.S. Naipaul. The first Nobel Prize winner of the 21st century has become the spokesman of immigrants. His work is full of the agony of an exile, the pangs of a man in search of meaning and identity and diasporic literature. In addition to this paper will examine the feelings of alienation and rootlessness undergone by expatriates with V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*.

Keywords: diaspora, rootlessness, alienation, expatriates, unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

Sir Vidiadhar Suraj prasad Naipaul was born in Trinidad and Tobago on 17 August 1932. In the 1880s, his ancestors came from India through the sugar plantation as indentured workers. The father of Naipaul became a journalist in English, after which he started submitting papers to the *Trinidad Guardian*. In 1954 Naipaul moved to London and started his career with BBC radio programme. In 1955 he wrote *The Mystic Masseur*. He continued his writing with new novels like *The Suffrage of Elvira*, *Miguel Street*, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *Mr. Stone and the Knight's Companion*, *The Mimic Men*, *A Flag on the Island*, *In a Free State*, *Guerrillas*, *A Bend in the River*, *A Way in the World* and so on. Simultaneously, he has written non-fictional work like *India: A Wounded Civilization*, *An Area of Darkness*, *The Middle Passage*, *The Loss of El Dorado*, *Among the Believers* etc.

Every nation has its literature, which reflects its own life, but each literature often reflects passions, concepts that are of continued importance and concern to men of all ages and countries. This reflects the permanence and universality of the great literary works left behind by people in distant ages and nations. That is why Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* are both read and loved, published in ancient Greece and Rome. Literature is not of one generation, but of every age, not of one nation but every nation. So, every age is reflected in the literature as literature is the mirror of life. The writers of English literature showed through their work the picture of society and the vision of life. Those scholars interested in Indian writing in English and commonwealth literature have great admiration for V.S. Naipaul. His novel *A Bend in the River* deals with the theme of diaspora.

Meaning of diaspora

Diaspora is frequently brought to use in discussing the issues pertaining to migrants from one socio-cultural tradition of one country to another country with different cultural traditions. The word 'Diaspora' is derived from a Greek word meaning, scatter through originally meant the dispersion of Jews from their homeland. It is now used in a general sense to refer to the

migration of people from one country to another for social, political, cultural or economic reasons. It may be voluntary or enforced. An element of flight, i.e., running away, is invariably present in such situations of migrated people who get uprooted from one cultural space and leaving as aliens in another, especially the sensitive and intellectual elements, acquire a peculiar consciousness. Some authors have witnessed migrants' sorrows, some have taken it positively. Diasporic writing is about two cultures; are native and foreign.

Diaspora is the migration to other parts worldwide of a wide number of citizens from their land. It is often a big community of citizens from a certain location who still live in various areas. The term 'Diaspora' has acquired a vast range of significations. It is a concept. It can be approached from a different point of view, but it is better to point out its various characteristics. A diaspora can be described as a community of people who have settled outside their own native country. The diasporic community maintain strong collective identities and acknowledge that the old country, the country of their origin, have a claim on their loyalty and emotions. A sense of co-ethnicity and a tendency to identify with fellow diaspora members in other countries prevails. A result of the strong retention of group ties over a long period could lead to keeping the diaspora away from the society of the people of the host country or country of their destination or adoption. The body of writing from a globally dispersed minority community with a common ancestral homeland is called diasporic.

Diaspora includes several themes. Diasporic writers write about dislocated beings and conditions of residents of foreign lands who have settled there as outsiders. Their writings handle the themes of anxiety, rootlessness, and alienation, splintered self, caught between two cultures or two spaces. The diasporic writing is more characterized by a longing for the homeland. The characters living abroad become nostalgic and frantic about their homeland. Some writers show politics of racism, the bad condition they have to live there as parasites or unwelcomed guests. The diaspora tries to adopt the culture, adjust to the environment and policies of the government there, but they cannot be cut off from the emotional bond and affinity with their home country. Some of them go through acculturation, assimilation, and still, they have the problem of identity. They are conscious of joyful and grief-stricken occasions there.

Diasporic literature deals with the theme of the trauma of transposition into an alien context, identity reformation, the acculturation of the protagonist, anxiety over the loss of the homeland, the use of indigenous (native) folklore as a sustaining mechanism, and protest against racial marginalization. Some writers are like the citizens of the world. They reflect the traveller's culture. They are at ease with different cultures in different geographical, national borders. They do not have the problem of an identity crisis. They do not stick to a particular context. They show multiple locations and multiple identities. They are psychologically in harmony with the new situations and cultures, and environments. Their interest is in novelty, new things and new cultures. They celebrate novelty. Their approach is cosmopolitan, but it is observed that the diaspora writes about mainly urban spaces, upper classes and elite class or middle class. They have no real touch with local, lower-class people and regional atmosphere. It is the result of their living in metropolitan cities like London, New York etc

V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* (1979) happens in an unidentified African post-colonial area talks of personal exile, diaspora, political and personal corruption. The narrator Salim, a Muslim Indian trader, opens a shop on the banks of the river in a small town. Salim is a Muslim Indian, but for several years his family resided in coastal Africa. He is not entirely Muslim Indian nor entirely African. Among the natives are a Belgian priest, a witch and her son Ferdinand, a white mind called Raymond, and his elegant companion, Yvette. The new

country's president is a demagogue called the Big Man who sets Raymond as his spokesman. The Big Man calls for freedom and liberty and he crushes any democratic resistance. The radicalised society trusts in its great propaganda. The financially incompetent citizen of the period who hired Salim to handle it loses the ownership of his shop.

Salim travels hundreds of miles across the African forest to his new residence. He bought a store from an old acquaintance of his dad. However, as Salim arrives, he sees a town that has almost reverted to the desert. Salim starts his new life, becomes acquaintances with others and encounters Zabeth, a local woman who buys products from her village. Ferdinand, Zabeth has a baby.

Meanwhile, Salim is informed that a violent rebellion has occurred on the coast, and his family has disappeared. A young man named Ali, one of her servants, was invited to reside with Salim. Ali comes full of the uprising's emotional stories. Metty (Ali) works in the shop for Salim. Ferdinand and Metty are now colleagues. Salim is with Mahesh and Shoba, another pair of shopkeepers. They're from other places, too. Salim has lunch at their apartment once a week. Salim anticipates a violent rebellion coming to the area, burying his valuables in an earth plot at the foot of the stairs that lead to his apartment. Salim would have liked Metty not to have seen where the things were hidden, fearing he's not confident. Ferdinand is annoyed by the school's close due to the growing violence in and around the city. He's comforted by Salim and Metty. Salim learns that Father Husimans was murdered, his corpse mutilated and returned in a canoe to the city. Peace has been restored, and the city is booming due to the interest of the country's ruler.

Salim received a letter from his father telling him of Nazruddin's daughter's commitment. Mahesh requests the assistance of Salim in several criminal activities. Afterwards, Mahesh launches the city's big burger chain. Friend of Salim's, Indar, a rich child from the coastal hometown of Salim, is coming to stay. He stays in the domain. Indar works to inform and promote innovative concepts on behalf of the unnamed company with which it works. Through spending time in the domain with Indar, Salim eventually thinks he has keys to his glamorous life. He also encounters Yvette, who begins an affair with Indar's friend Raymond's wife. Raymond is a scholar and writer who was the president's nearest associate who was now sent to the city to wait for graces again. Salim reads some of the papers of Raymond and is shocked to find out that his African experience derives from colonial roots. An updated edition of Raymond's speech book is distributed as a condensed collection of quotations. After a children's procession to glorify, the book goes bad the local Youth Guard is dissolved. After the president humiliates the Youth Guard, aggression falls into the city. Metty is regularly abused and arrested by authorities. The friendship between Salim and Yvette cools and beats her badly one afternoon.

Salim decides he must leave to see Nazruddin in London. He's engaged with Nazruddin's daughter in London and learns that Indar has lost his career and is badly advanced. Salim returns to the river town to learn that the time, a retired mechanic and low-level official, owned his shop by the administration. Salim works as the manager in the shop and starts to smuggle ivory and gold to make his escape money. Metty, furious about Salim, informs the police where Salim had hidden illicit ivory for failing to save him. Salim is being kept in detention. Ferdinand, a district commissioner, releases Salim and tells him to go on a steamer the next day. The president comes, and everybody, Ferdinand included, is frightened. Salim books passage on the steamer and sails downriver. Armed men tried to overtake it, but lose, only successfully capturing the barge. Salim leaves the town on the river to the sound of gunshots, and the reader speculates how good he's left his past.

Life of diaspora

Salim befriends other expatriates due to the proverb 'Birds of the same feather fly together. All these are alienated and leading the life of the diaspora. In addition to this, Mahesh, Shobha and Salim had lunch together once a week as they feel secure with their presence in another country. They feel secure. Their property is also insecure. With the fear of losing the valuables, he buried them. He feels rootless. His family is dispersed. With all this discussion, we can conclude that Naipaul's protagonist, i.e., Salim is an outsider who realizes that his way of life is almost at its end, and eventually, he must give up everything. So, it has some diasporic elements. The novel narrates the real-life of immigrants, their struggle for identity and existence.

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