

SENSE OF PLACE AND POST –COLONIAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE FICTION OF V.S. NAIPAUL: HALF A LIFE AND MAGIC SEEDS

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V.S.Naipaul's more than twenty five of fiction and non fiction works have won him virtually every conceivable literary award including coveted the noble Prize in the year 2001. He is undoubtedly one of the most distinguished novelists of the present century. As an author of fiction and non fiction his works have a special identity of their own and it would be proper to regard him as novelist of ideas. In the special sense of the term it would not be exaggerating to comment that today at 80 with more than half a century devoted to literature, V.S.Naipaul has reached that stage when the focus shift from the story to the story teller. From the very beginning he wanted to relate literature to life. This does not mean that he had a political axe to grind. He remains primarily a great novelist on the sheer strength of his breathy imagination and a mature sense of organisation.

From the perspective of sense of place and post colonial theory V.S.Naipaul's literary output is of great literary value and is highly appreciable. In his fiction there is realistic description of colonial society as well as crisis and ups and downs of post colonial era. This paper aims at analysing the theme of sense of place and Post- coloniality in V.S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* and in *Magic Seeds*.

The term colonism denotes acquisition and frost possession by a nation of other territories and their people's. The term took on a more specific meaning in the late 19th century when colonists show it as the expression of the civilization from the West to the uncivilized people of the backward societies. Although freedom from erstwhile colonization has been achieved almost everywhere, except that it has been replaced by neo-colonism; the policy and practice of a strong nations holding their sway territorially over a weaker nation at its people.

On the other side, the main themes of postcolonial literature divide themselves between the experience and legacy of colonialism and the experience of migrancy and exile. According to Hiren Gohain:

Post- Colonialism or rather post-Coloniality, is thus related to the contemporary crisis of Western capitalism, unable to pursue the path of classical imperial exploitation; disturbed and troubled by resistances of and tensions within the third world, and yet driven by its own logic to build a global economic and cultural order to maintain its hegemony without alienating the exploited and dominated regions of the world.¹

The term postcolonialism has mixed connotations. It has brought about the beginning of colonial power structures and empowering of the marginality, gendered or engendered: it has

considerably increased the significance of literary studies and widened the horizons of globalization. While the term sense of place has been defined and used in many different ways by many different people. One definition is that a place comes into existence when humans give meaning to a part of the larger, undifferentiated space. Any time a location is identified or given a name, it is separated from the undefined space that surrounds it. Some places, however, have been given stronger meanings, names or definitions by society than others. These are the places that are said to have a strong Sense of Place.

The sense of place is a social phenomenon that exists independently of any one individual's experiences, yet is dependent on human engagement for its existence. Such a feeling may be derived from the natural environment, but is more often made up of a mix of natural and cultural features in the landscape, and generally includes the people who occupy the place.

The key point of this paper is to highlight this theme of post colonialism and the sense of place by analysing V.S.Naipaul's Two Novel's *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*. The novel, *Half a Life* is a story of the protagonist, Willie Somerset Chandran, the protagonist willie was born in India in 1930s. He stuck in the conflict between his father from Brahmin family and his mother from untouchable class. Willie's father says about Willie mother:

I actually had someone in mind. There was a girl at the university. I didn't know her. I hadn't spoken to her. I had merely noticed her. She was small and coarse-featured, almost tribal in appearance, noticeably black, with two big top teeth that showed very white. She wore colours that were sometimes very bright and sometimes very muddy, seeming to run into the blackness of her skin. She would have belonged to backward caste.²

Willie detests his father's ridiculous opinion to fulfil '*a life of sacrifice*'.³ By getting married with his mother from a low-class family because his father leads the so-called sacrifice life out of his hypocrisy He couldn't accept the Brahmanism and racism. Nevertheless, he falls into the racial loss after departing from India to England in order to construct his own subjectivity.

The novel, *half a life* begins with these words of protagonist 'Willie' "why is my middle name Somerset? The boys at school have just found out, and they are mocking me.' 'His father said without joy, 'You were named after a great English writer. I am sure you have seen his book about the house.'⁴ From Willie's father's story, Willie understands his family history, culture, heritage and roots. However, he couldn't accept that his second name is named after the famous English writer Somerset Maugham, who visited Willie's town in the years before Independence since he thinks that he should be named after his family. Willie thus possesses only "half a name." The novel seems to reveal Willie's father's intention that his son "mimics" the whites, since he gave him half of a white man's name. Willie can clearly see the gap between the colonial's mimicry of the colonizer and his desire to construct himself in a chaotic world. The next chapter focusses on Willie's schooldays, and then his escape to England, to study. Here, too, stories are important, a form of communication in the household where Willie (like his father before him) does not feel he can express things directly. Willie writes several compositions which are lauded at school but which outrage and disappoint his actual audience -- his father. (Similarly, hearing his father's life-story led Willie to tell his father he despised him. Cathartic the tales may be, but they tend not to please their audiences.)

In the novel, Naipaul presents characters who are products of a racial and cultural mix and shows how they struggle to find their identity in the multi-cultural society they live in. In general, these characters tend to deny one or more racial characteristics in order to become “more respectable,” in their estimation. However, they eventually discover that their identity cannot be fixed because they are the fruits of multiple cultures. All through the novel, Willie is drifting without a solid and fixed identity. He cannot try to achieve one fixed identity because of his multi-background. The novel has three settings: first there is post-independence India, then London, and finally pre-independence Africa. All three are places that Naipaul can identify with. However, the three locations seem to signify different meanings in the novel. India and Africa are inexact and vague, while the representation of London with street names and other markers is clearer; thus, Meenakshi Mukherjee contends that “for Naipaul, England is situated at a different level of reality, firm and stable, while other regions can be relegated to haziness”⁵.

Willie deeply realizes that he must seize the time to construct his subjectivity because he has spent too much time leading a life of escapism:

He thought that was how I appeared in London. That is how I appeared now .I am not as along as I thought .then he thought, ‘I am wrong. I am not like them .I am forty one middle lif. They are fifteen or twenty years younger, and the world has changed. They have proclaimed e who they are and they are risking everything for it. I have been hiding from myself .I have risked nothing. And now the best part of my life is over.⁶

Willie is looking forward to starting anew with the future half of his life. The rest of his story is left open: Naipaul leaves an imaginative space for his readers. Willie will continue to search for his identity and a place of his own in the world. In the process of constructing subjectivity, Willie confronts the sense of placelessness and discovers that he can’t create a fixed identity. He therefore comprehends that identity is not stable but created in the process making just like the assertion of the postcolonial discourse.

Thus, *Half a Life* presents a more optimistic attitude toward the future than the previous ones: when a man can candidly face the dilemma of his own situation in life, he will fear nothing. Significantly, Naipaul empowers himself through his writing. Like his father before him, he is seeking his own home in the world; he constructs a home for himself through his creative writing. He constructs his own subjectivity via the powerful writing.

Willie in *Half a Life* decides to start a new life, no longer desiring to live under Ana’s protection. He rethinks his life and decides to face challenges of the future without attempting to escape or withdraw. This is just like Timothy Weiss’s critique on Naipaul’s works:

To be on the margins is to be part of yet not part of; in the self’s encounter with others, the exile can live a “double exteriority” for he or she belongs to two cultures without identifying wholly with either. The exile can engage in a cross-cultural dialogue and through that dialogue can affirm both his uniqueness and the interrelationship between himself and others.⁷

therefore, in terms of postcolonial perspectives, Willie in *Half a Life* just like Naipaul himself has the unfixed identity in the construction of subjectivity though he must experience the ruptures among subjectivity, geography, and language toward multicultural and fluid identity.

The protagonist 'Willie' moves from India to London and finally to Africa in the late 1950s, where he marries a Portuguese woman and appears to settle. *Magic Seeds* jumps ahead 18 years to Berlin, where Willie, six months after leaving his wife, now lives in a temporary, half-and-half way" with his sister Sarojini, experiencing the listlessness that has plagued him since his youth. Willie's problem, as he sees it, is that he has always been someone on the outside for whom time passes fruitlessly by. He garners little sympathy from Sarojini, who berates him with diatribes condemning his colonial psychosis. She views Willie as a privileged man who has deliberately avoided taking on a meaningful life as a revolutionary.

According to Sarojini, Willie should have participated in a glorious war of revolution as an inhabitant of both India and Africa during times of upheaval. We all have wars to go to, she says:

You were on the outside because you wanted to be .you've always preferred to hide. It's the colonial psychosis, the caste psychosis. You inherited it from your father. You were in Africa for eighteen years. There was a great guerrilla war there.⁸ Sarogi again says "It was always far away. It was a secret war, until the very end".⁹

Emboldening by the criticism of Sarogini and the expiration of his visa, Willie left Berlin and "after more then twenty years, Willie saw India again. He had left India with very little money, the gift of his father; and he was going back with very little money, the gift of his sister."¹⁰

Willie joins a revolutionary group in India, sparking the most engaging part of *Magic Seeds*. Willie's placement with communist guerillas is absurd:

There has been some mistake .I have fallen among the wrong people. I have come to the wrong revolution. I don't like these faces .And yet I have to be with them. I have to get a message out to Sarojini or to Joseph. But I don't Know how .I am completely in the hands of these people.¹¹

Willie's experiences here are germane. At first, he sees the revolutionaries as people unwilling to let go of old ideas about home and country. But as he lives and fights with them, he notices that some guerillas experience the same displacement as Willy, finding in their futile war a sense of purpose. Others are motivated by things as inane as sexual frustration, or as significant as childhood beatings or lifelong suffering due to the machinations of the upper classes.

Eventually, Willie is captured and thrown into jail, where the prison routine provides relief from life as a jungle fighter. From there, with comical luck, Naipaul shifts Willie to England, where he restarts his disengaged life working for an architectural magazine. His guerrilla experiences have jaundiced his view of the society in which he once maintained a static existence. By novel's end, Willie progresses toward finding himself at home in the world.

Magic Seeds occupies an identifiable place in Naipaul's philosophy, and those who generally enjoy his work will like what's here. Readers unfamiliar with his work have much to gain as well, though Naipaul's style can feel disengaged from reality. Conversations are heavily one-sided, characters are constantly in a mode of self-reflection, and as the second half of the novel progresses, and the events in *Magic Seeds* have a fleeting, episodic quality. Despite Naipaul's heavy-handed ways, his precise art offers something revelatory about society - even if he has revealed it before.

Both the novel's prove Author's worldwide experience of post colonial world and his own plight of sense of place .Almost all the time while reading his novels we realise that through his protagonist Naipaul explains his own experiences and his own plight. That is why the work of Naipaul seems lifelike and the literary work of real world viewer. He is real man of post-colonial world.

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