



## Quest for Identity in V.S. Naipaul's 'An Area of Darkness'

**G. Banu Rekha**

Master of English Literature, Dr. N.G.P. Arts and Science College, Coimbatore

Email - [banu2000.1999@gmail.com](mailto:banu2000.1999@gmail.com)

**Abstract :** *Diasporic writings have ushered a new sensation in literature by incorporating multicultural themes into the work of art. V.S. Naipaul's An Area of Darkness describes the sense of disillusionment of the period in his early sixties, in which he depicts the minds of India, not India. It is a travelogue concerned with the thematic structure of diasporic elements such as poverty, mental turmoil, corruption, religion, and other disclosures. Naipaul states the controversial issues between the ancestral culture of India and the western culture of England. The novel exemplifies the diasporic dimension through isolation and alienation, which brings the various dimensions of reflections in him. On the contrary, he sarcastically embellished the traumatic structure of the survival of quest, in which he majorly contemplated the socio-political scenarios. The paper attempts to epitomize the main objectives of Naipaul's traumatic wound physically and mentally during his travel pursuit.*

**Keywords:** *Diasporic, Disillusionment, Journey, Multiculturalism, Wound.*

Diasporic literature occupies a special position between different cultures and nations. This exemplifies the idea of a homeland, the place where exile takes place, and narratives of the rigorous journeys undertaken because of contractual liabilities, which are all characteristics of diaspora. In literature, Naipaul, a contemporary writer known for his diasporic writings, is exemplified as a key evaluator because, as a controversial writer and voice of the Indian diaspora, he elevated the sense of alienation from one root of origin to another.

The identity crisis, sentimentality, familial and marital relationships, as well as the multicultural milieu's inherent alienation, dislocation, and existential rootlessness, are the main themes of diasporic literature. As the diaspora's components take shape, migration and expatriation follow. It also examines the problems caused by the amalgamation or disintegration of cultures. The purpose of writing for the diasporic community's creative writers is to navigate the alien land's non-acceptance of their existence and ethnic discrimination. The ancestral impulse and the connection to ancestral soil are stressed in *An Area of Darkness*.

The novel was banned by the Indian government because Naipaul caused more controversy by depicting the plight of the Western world, in which he finds the Indian scenario unbearable. Diasporic writing always elevates the concept of post-colonialism; here it is used as a major key tool to bring the reader's attention to his writing. *An Area of Darkness* is the first trilogy that includes *India A Wounded Civilization*, and *India A Million Mutinies Now*. The novel is a very logical emotional and subjective book in descriptive and anecdotal text format.

Naipaul claims that even though Indians defecate everywhere, they refuse to accept this reality. The reasons he believes poverty is so real in India are thoroughly examined by him in a very rational manner.

Naipaul showed no respect for Hinduism or its ritualistic practices. He didn't like the new-borns thread in India ceremony. Writers from the West Indies, particularly George Lamming, criticized Naipaul for not giving non-Indian people enough prominence in his works. Naipaul discovered that as he traveled across India's featureless, black region, in which he found his world diminished and weakened. As a travelogue, he portrays the negative aspects of India. He also attacks the caste system, politicians, people's superstition beliefs, monuments, and other disclosures.

Naipaul states that even fellow Indians did not regard them as human beings. Everyone is self-centered and egoistic in their selfishness and jealousy toward others. He implies that people are stunted and ugly because only their physical attractiveness is seen, not their inner beauty. Naipaul was disgraced by the people's dirt and filth, in which he imparted uncleanliness, beggar disclosure, and a scenario in India. Beggary, on which Naipaul focuses, occupies a unique status in India and cannot be evaluated from a European perspective. Beggars occupy a stable status in society. It is inextricably linked to India. That almost became a ritual. They wander through streets replete with human waste



without noticing it. The sole reason that sanitation facilities and toilets are still uncommon in India is that the country's population prefers to defecate outside. They now do it every day, and it has become a habit. As Naipaul claims, it is completely beyond the comprehension of the Westerner. Naipaul paints a picture of the Indian Railways. They are a permanent part of every traveler's memory. The primary focus of social activity is railroading. In this, Naipaul exposes the hopelessness and unending suffering in India.

My train was due to leave in about two hours; the coaches were waiting. I changed my third-class ticket for a first-class one, picked my way down dim platforms, past the bodies of dogs and men, past the third-class carriage which was already hot. The conductor opened the door of my compartment and I climbed it. I bolted the door, and pulled down all the blinds, trying to shut out the howls of dogs, shutting out intrudes all those staring faces and skeletal bodies. I put on no lights. I required darkness (Naipaul, 1964, p. 239).

In his work, Naipaul symbolizes India as a resting place for imagination. He, as a traveler, came back to visit his ancestral impulse where at an initial stage, he epitomizes the contrast and contradictory responses by bringing personal and social enquiry. Naipaul makes a serious attempt to address identity issues in *An Area of Darkness*. Naipaul's deep awareness of his own rootlessness and displacement has influenced his creative talent. As a writer from the diaspora, Naipaul's perspective is exceedingly limited. His sense of exclusion from and separation from India weighs heavily on his writing. The literature of exile from the 20th century is rife with the themes of exile and alienation. The India that Naipaul linked with the individuals and objects in his immediate environment remained featureless. He stated that:

I thought of the time when the transference was made as period darkness, darkness which also extends to the land, as darkness surrounds a hut in evening, though for a little way around the hut, there is still light. The light was the area of my experience in time and place (Naipaul, 1964, p.30).

His multiple heritages and the peculiar displacement which leave him connected to three societies and yet belonging to none, in the outcome become not only the impelling force behind his writing but also its very subject. Naipaul feels horrified by the dreadful state of India's poverty. He believes that in this nation, poverty serves as an endless supply of tears rather than as an inspiration for rage or action that is beneficial. He claims that because India is the world's poorest nation, any new tourist arriving in Bombay would be upset and irritated to see the condition of India, where the impoverished sweep the street, spread a mat, and collapse fatigued and undernourished. He is extremely astonished by the inequality in India.

He bought the vivid explanation on the on the people's poverty When Naipaul pays a trip to the village and meets the emaciated Ramachandra who is surrounded by dire poverty he is appalled and simply wants to leave the country at once. Poverty is seen as a self-defeating and destructive reality in this country. The most striking to the eye Naipaul, before he could penetrate into the psyche of India, was its visual aspect. He sees the country full of dirt, dust, starved and sick people, and poor beggars. Indian poverty commented on throughout the travelogue, is for Naipaul an enormously painful experience. His vivid descriptions of people squatting in the streets and of dirty, decrepit beggars craving for alms create a typical picture of the Indian environment. His vivid descriptions of people squatting in the streets and of dirty, decrepit beggars craving for alms create a typical picture of the Indian environment.

He bought the plight of self-defense, loss of voice, and self-possession, and also, he epitomized the relationship between India and him, which has never been pleasant towards him. With two generations separating him from India, Naipaul is sufficiently distanced from the country that he views it as "an area of the imagination" and a collection of memories that easily fit into the most well-known romantic mythical patterns. He never truly adopted Hinduism. Naipaul is at once alienated from India and compelled to be connected to it by the rituals, the implications of which he has barely comprehended. In India, his writing is an impoverished nation that bothers people all the time. Even if knowing it hurts, it needs to be recognized, because he wants to portray the ancestral impulse of India and the featureless area of darkness.

The caste system and religious practices are highlighted through Naipaul's imaginative approach. In India, caste meant trauma and separation, but in Trinidad, it had no impact on people's way of life. He resented witnessing the Indians' caste division leave stains on their hands. Naipaul has little respect for

Hinduism or its ritualistic practices. He doesn't like the newborn baby's thread ceremony. According to him, India is alien land, which he exemplifies the peculiar displacement. He compares India and Western land conveying that in his Western land, he felt comfortable and safe.

He exemplified the depiction and feelings of alienation and turmoil, as stated in his writing, by trying to rediscover his roots and identity, from which he was alienated by birth, culture, and emotion. This paper attempts an effort to represent the predominant aspects of Naipaul's physical and psychological pain during his travels, his quest apparently depicts the individual's identity, and he also includes the quest for political identity. He replicates India's



scenario and the contradictory lives of people. It underlies the issues of alienation from society, bordering on the rootlessness of their existence.

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