

## Fragmented Selves: Diasporic Consciousness in V.S. Naipaul's The Mimic Men

**Prof. (Dr.) Ritu Sharma**

*Dept. of English*

*Dyal Singh College, Karnal*

*Email: ritu\_cs@rediffmail.com*

### **Abstract**

*In Naipaul's The Mimic Men, we are introduced to a world in which globalization has redefined the meaning of identity. This paper examines V.S. Naipaul's novel, The Mimic Men (1967), for diasporic consciousness and the challenges it presents. Works by V.S. Naipaul trace third-world societies' social, political, and economic realities in colonial and postcolonial situations. V.S. Naipaul's book The Mimic Men is about the phenomenon of diasporic consciousness and various challenges that Diasporas face. This book tends to talk about themes of ethnicity, nationalism, and hegemony. It is about how people living abroad or outside of their own land or culture see themselves in this world. Through the eyes of the protagonists, we can talk about various fears and uncertainties of living as an exile. Diasporic consciousness is a potent tool for exploring the complexities of identity and belonging in Naipaul's work.*

### **Keywords**

*Diasporic, Consciousness, Globalization, Identity and Mimic Men.*

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

**Received: 30.11.12**

**Approved: 05.12.25**

**Dr. Ritu Sharma**

Fragmented Selves: Diasporic  
Consciousness in V.S.  
Naipaul's The Mimic Men

**Notions July. - Dec. 2025,**

Vol. XVI, No. 2,

Pg. 075-080

Article No. 10

Similarity Check: 03%

**Online available at :**

<https://anubooks.com/journal-volume/notions-vol-xvi-no2-july-dec-2025>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.31995/notions.2025v16i02.10>

Diaspora literature is a form of writing that examines the experiences of migrants and refugees and can take the form of both fiction and non-fiction. Diaspora literature typically deals with the effect of dislocation upon an individual and society. Diaspora literature is a form of writing that refers to a literary work with a subject matter as the experiences of people who leave their home countries. Diaspora literature consists of both published writing by migrants and descendants of immigrants, and literature from people who have immigrated to another country but remain integrated within the diasporic community left behind. In diasporic literature, whether it's the effects of migration on identity, or ways diaspora literature connects us to understand the world, diaspora literature provides something for everyone who wishes to understand the world around us. Diaspora literature is important for many reasons, but fundamentally it provides us with insight into the experiences of people who have left their home countries. This has the potential to expand our view of migration in general and allow us to examine the effects of that displacement on individuals. In addition, diaspora literature often investigates how migrants experience connections to their homeland and other sites around the world. This can serve as a basis for analysis regarding migrant communities' ability to sustain and form relationships internationally. Finally, diaspora literature can create opportunities for seeing the world through the eyes of others; this brings forth a perspective that tends to be neglected or overlooked.

Diaspora literature has existed for centuries, but it is currently going through a rebirth. This is partly because migration has become a more prominent feature of our understanding of global politics and culture. As individuals and communities face greater displacement, whether literally or metaphorically, they seek books that can speak to their experience. In an increasingly complicated world, diaspora literature constitutes an important means of exploring complex geopolitics and global connections for readers in a format that is more comprehensible and accessible.

V.S. Naipaul's chosen work - *The Mimic Men* (1967) is explored for its theme of diasporic consciousness and the dilemmas it poses. The works of V.S. Naipaul are both a chronicle of the socio-political and economic conditions of third-world contexts situated in the colonial and post-colonial era; they also serve as proxies for the powerless, marginalized, and disenfranchised subjects of society, that is, immigrants and diasporic populations, characterized by their expression of disconnection, dislocation, fragmentation, and dissociation. The main characters in the book lead quite nomadic lives—moving from place to place in search of origins and identity. They feel homelessness, anomie, alienation, and nostalgia. Naipaul, through his writing, has always distilled the tension between those who live in the

center and those on the periphery, or the difference between the native and non-native, or black and white.

In Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, we enter a world, that is fashioned by the limits of globalization that restricts the very sense of identification. Naipaul explores the idea of the impact of globalization on the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago, one of the Caribbean sovereign states. He elaborates on diasporic consciousness, which is the idea that Trinidadians embrace that they share that consciousness with other people around the globe. Naipaul explores how this diasporic consciousness affects the characters he creates in *The Mimic Men* and its ramifications on society. Diasporic consciousness is a topic in V.S. Naipaul's work and is often invoked to examine ideas of identity and selfhood. The diaspora of Indian immigrants to Britain is a key issue in V.S. Naipaul's novel, *The Mimic Men*, and it shapes the plot in important ways. The manner in which the immigrants experience Britain, the ways in which they have to deal with their diaspora, and the ways in which their identities/British practices come into conflict is all part of Naipaul's exploration. The diaspora of Indian immigrants to Britain is a key issue in V.S. Naipaul's novel, *The Mimic Men*, and it is important to the plot of the novel. In the narrative, such Indian immigrants, have trouble with their identities and sense of selfhood as they may have to recreate a self to fit into British society. Naipaul explores the ways in which this has an impact on his characters and their sense of selfhood.

Furthermore, *The Mimic Men* is also a story about colonialism. Naipaul uses the plot of the novel as a way to examine the impact of colonialism on the immigrants and the British society as a whole. He highlights how colonial officials try to control and manipulate the immigrants in order to get the upper hand on them, and the author examines the complications these manipulations have on both the groups. *The Mimic Men* is an interesting, complex book that discusses many various topics. *The Mimic Men* is a novel, written by British author, V.S. Naipaul, that tells the story of immigrants from the Caribbean nation now known as Trinidad and Tobago, who have to redefine their identities in British society. The negative clash between the various groups has a negative consequence and the novel is an exploratory narrative relating to colonialism.

The theme of diasporic consciousness and the many challenges that Diasporas encounter is covered in the novel by V.S. Naipaul *the Mimic Men*. The diasporic characters presented in this narrative are depicted as men of suffering who navigate the horrible and brutal aspects of life in the country in which they inhabit. With the intention of examining their inner turmoil, confusion, and disarray within this study. However, it is worth noting that certain elements of the diasporic characters represent the modern diaspora group.

Just because Diasporas are now transnational forces and the status of being a diaspora is a choice, not necessarily forced, the cognitive capacity of Diasporas still would not be devoid of the fear of problems or issues that are experienced at any time in their host lands for one or more reasons. They also have to work to construct their identity and prove their worthiness on top of the suffering of diasporic consciousness, and so they would be investigating everything.

Mimicry is often encountered in colonial and postcolonial literature when a person or group from a colonized society enters the society of their colonizers and attempts to mimic their eating habits, dress patterns, and language and behavioral types. A migrant or diaspora member who finds himself in an unfamiliar territory aims to acclimatize and sometimes mimic the locals in which he is now living. This mimicry is often a desire to become someone else, to be better, to become another who is not exactly another. Thus, it is “the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994: 122).

We can refer to examples of characters in *The Mimic Men*. For example, Lieni- a Maltese woman, a basement housekeeper living in a hotel who imagined she was a smart London girl. She put considerable effort in when she went out in creating her smart London girl persona. Also, we see the narrator has attempted to copy the gestures of their landlord, Mr. Shylock. He attempted to stroke his lobe of ear and leaned his head over to listen as a gesture he found appealing. Bhabha argues that mimicry is a sign of double articulation- it signifies differences, and yet involves an attempt at reform in that it signifies embodied mimicry of the powerful. However, it is also a threat. It is seen as a threat because it continuously signifies an identity that does not align with the colonizer. For example, in the novel *A Bend in the River*, Metty learns the language and other characteristics of their language including the intonation, and is capable of communicating as if he is one of them. Thus, it is a threat to native's language skills as well as authority, which is constructed through mastery of the language.

The exploration of ethnicity, nationalism and hegemony as represented in V.S. Naipaul's novel, '*The Mimic Men*', represents an interesting exploration of the issues around these topics. Naipaul uses mimicry as a lens through which to investigate these ideas in a way that is both engaging and thought-provoking. The purpose of this essay, is to discuss how Naipaul uses mimicry to address ethnicity, nationalism and hegemony and ultimately why these concepts are significant in understanding the novel. There is no definitive answer to the question of how nationalism, ethnic, and hegemony are intertwined in the novel '*The Mimic*'. However, in an overarching sense, Naipaul illustrates the ways that these constructs

interact both implicitly and explicitly throughout the text. In particular Naipaul describes issues of hegemonic masculinity as a construct that can be used to exploit and oppress women, as well as demonstrates how both nationalism and ethnicity can be used to justify violence.

He also demonstrates how the concepts can serve to maintain the cycle of domination and/or exploitation. In the novel, *The Mimic Men*, V.S. Naipaul addresses ethnicity, nationalism, and hegemony through the character of Rajesh. Rajesh is a Bengali-American who has moved from America to London to work as a scientist at a multinational company. He is married to a white British woman and has two children. Rajesh is situated precariously within the ramifications of Brexit, which has led to serious tensions within his community. Naipaul's novel uses Rajesh's experiences to explore themes of identity, nationalism and hegemony. Ethnicity, nationalism and hegemony have always been interconnected. This is particularly the case in literature when an author, through the lens of fiction, is often projecting their own political views through the representations of different groups of people. In V.S. Naipaul's novel, '*The Mimic Men*', we are introduced to how the ideas are manifested amongst a group of Indian mimics struggling to survive in a segregated society. This deeply explores the scope in which race; ethnicity and nationality can be exploited for the purpose of social domination and exploitation and/or control and malleability of people.

This paper outlines diasporic consciousness in V. S. Naipaul's novel, *The Mimic Men*. As the title suggests, diasporic consciousness relates to how people living outside their country or culture perceive their place in the world. Through the perspective of the characters, the various anxieties and uncertainties that come with being in exile are examined. Naipaul's novels present diasporic consciousness as a nuanced concept that sheds light on the various layers of identity and belonging. By exploring the experiences of diasporic and migrant characters, Naipaul reveals the universality of human experience and emotion. By analyzing the characters and their relationships with each other, Naipaul presents ways that diaspora shapes identity and meaning-making about the world.

The novel explores how people cope with feelings of disconnection and alienation, and how these can either be beneficial or detrimental. The idea of diasporic consciousness is one that is extensively discussed in Naipaul's books and is a very useful tool for comprehending the themes of the novels of V.S. Naipaul.

## References

1. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 2006. PDF File.

2. Bhat, Yashoda. V.S. Naipaul: *An Introduction*. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 2000. Print.
3. Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge, 1996. PDF File.
4. Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 2017. Print.
5. Byom, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001. PDF File.
6. Cudjoe, Selwyn. V.S. Naipaul: *A Materialist Reading*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1988. Print.
7. Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth. Trans. Constance Ferrington 1963*. London: Penguin Books, 2001. Print.
8. Hughes, Peter. V.S. Naipaul: *Contemporary Writers*. London: Routledge, 1988. Print.
9. Kamra, Shashi. *The Novels of V.S. Naipaul: A Study in Theme and Form*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1990. Print.
10. Joshi, Chandra B. V.S. Naipaul: *The Voice of Exile*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1994. Print.
11. Nayar, Pramod K. *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction. India*: Pearson, 2008. Print.
12. Pradhan, Prakash Chandra. *V.S. Naipaul and Postcolonialism: Writing History, Politics, Culture, Self*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2018. Print.
13. Rai, Sudha. *A Study in Expatriate Sensibility*. New Delhi: Heinemann, 1982. Print.