



**A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE DISPLACEMENT EXPERIENCE IN
V.S. NAIPAUL'S MIMIC MEN, SAM SELVON'S THE LONDONERS AND
SALMAN RUSHDIE'S MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN**

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Abstract

Post colonialism focuses on the human plights, exploitation of the subjugated and other themes like hybridity, migration, exile and displacement. Recent literatures in the world shared the experiences of the people who left their homeland. The main aim of the current study is to compare the experiences of displacement in the works selected for the study. The novels selected for the study are The Mimic Men, The Lonely Londoners and The Midnight's Children. It will also explore the literature of the migrant people, share their experiences in detail. Also, the writers selected for the study will be analyzed in a postcolonial perspective. The study will gather the literature form the past review papers and also the primary sources in support of the argument raised in the proposed research. From the study it is understood that the main characters in each novel suffered from displacement experiences in the name of migrating from one place to another irrespective of any reason.

1 INTRODUCTION

Post colonialism deals with the effects of colonization on colonization and society. Also, it denotes the cultural effects of colonization who lived under the European colonies. The partition of India in 1947

experienced several displacement issues as a consequence of post colonialism. The term post-colonial has gained significance in contemporary literary theory and criticism. This kind of literature intends to promote the newly emerging literature wherein the writers

experience a great shift in the process of writing. Thus, the current study is an attempt to conduct a comparative analysis of all the postcolonial experiences in the selected works. For this, the novels of V.S.Naipaul, Sam Selvon and Salman Rushdie are selected. The Mimic Men, The Lonely Londoners, and The Midnight's Children are the novels focused on the present research. Also, the study will discuss the displacement, the key term in postcolonial theory widely applicable to all migrant situations. According to the theory, displacement can be referred to both physical displacement and socially or culturally been thrown out of place. Therefore, the main purpose of the study is to examine and explore the displacement experiences as depicted in V.S. Naipaul's Mimic Men, Sam Selvon's The Lonely Londoners and Salman Rushdie's The Midnight's Children. The other aims of the study are to explore the migrant literature, share their experiences and stories of migration. Also, the study aims to make a comparative study of the displacement experiences as analyzed in the novels selected for the study. This chapter will analyze in detail each novel in the perspective of post colonialism and bring out the plights of the subjugated and present in different sections.

1.1 V.S. NAIPAUL AS A POSTCOLONIAL NOVELIST

V.S. Naipaul has always stood in the pantheon of postcolonial writers who had an acute sense of observation. Almost all his works reflect on colonial rule, the political and intellectual opinions on the colonial rule and hopes on nationhood. Naipaul is a versatile travel writer, novelist and a journalist who presents the extreme reality of the contemporary world. The works of Naipaul dealt with experiences of exile through the course of human history (Dalley 3). Naipaul is an award-winning novelist who constantly tried to present the rigorous explanation of post-colonial life. As a postcolonial novelist, Naipaul gained wide acclamation for his clarity and persuasiveness in dealing with a variety of themes. Hence Naipaul is considered as the undying voice of contemporary Indian English Literature. In most of the works, Naipaul explores the themes of post colonialism. Naipaul's writing career can be seen as a life long journey from one world to another world. In the wake of post colonialism, writers began to stress themes like exile, identity, migration, and displacement. Since then the literature has been in a constant change with reality. It is

widely observed that the works of Naipaul have gained special attention with its peculiar treatment of themes such as exile, identity crisis, migration, and displacement (Zhou 12). Naipaul has made immense contributions to the field of English Literature. Some of the noteworthy writings of Naipaul include *A Bend in the River*, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *A Way in the World*, *The Mimic Men* and several others.

1.2 SAM SELVON AS A POSTCOLONIAL NOVELIST

Sam Selvon is one of the most noted contemporary postcolonial writers from Carribea. Being born into a multi-cultural society, he considers himself as an Indian. To his fame, he has written wide number of novels, short stories, poems and also essays for the newspapers. Slevon is considered as a great literary figure in the English speaking Caribbean, and his works form an integral part of the Caribbean diasporic literature (Guruprasad 547). Common themes such as colonialism, independence, migration, racial identity, hybrid identity, Caribbean language (Creole), and community life are resonated in the works of Sam Selvon. According to Guruprasad, Selvon's novels capture various aspects of the historical and social experiences of the people of his native land

(545). The works of Selvon focus on the postcolonial processes and concepts, including colonialism, hybridity, migration, diaspora, creolization and colonial discourse. His novels highlight the Caribbean historical background and Caribbean culture in the postcolonial context. His works exposes and argues the existence of postcolonial identities in Caribbean cultural life. The other Carribean literary figures apart from Sam Selvon include C. L .R James, George Lamming, Wilson Harris, Derek Walcott, V S Naipaul, Edward Brathwaite, Earl Lovelace who focus on colonization, ethnicity, hybridity, creolization, racial trauma, gender identity, mixed blood, and other key concepts of postcolonial studies. Some of the important works of Selvon include *A Brighter Son* (1952), *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), *Ways of Sunlight* (1957), *Turn Again Tiger* (1958), *I Hear Thunder* (1963), *The Housing Lark* (1965), *A Drink of Water* (1968) and others.

1.3 SALMAN RUSHDIE AS A POSTCOLONIAL NOVELIST

Salman Rushdie is one of the prominent literary figures in the postcolonial literature. The novels of Salman Rushdie are said to be the true representation of post colonialism. As a novelist, Rushdie presented his own life

which includes the traditions of Indo-English Literature. Rushdie is called as the man of diaspora as he is well-versed in exploring the plights of the exiled. From his works, it is observed that Rushdie has been facing several inner and outer struggles. Apart from these, he also deals with the issues of colonial identity, hybridity, displacement and nationalism (Tiwari 78). Salman Rushdie deals with various national and International themes such as migration, exile, diaspora, nationalism, multiculturalism, and dualism. Hence, the writings have become the focus of a certain kind of struggle for cultural identity in Britain and other Western states. Some of the noted works include *The Midnight's Children*, *The Shame*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and others. Throughout all the narrative Rushdie celebrates this hybridity, multiplicity, and multiculturalism.

1.4 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE NOVELS SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

The Mimic Men by V.S. Naipaul is a novel about a politician from an island in the Caribbean who is in exile in London. The novel evokes a colonial man's experience in postcolonial world. It is an autobiographical memoir of a colonial exile politician-writer

living as a refugee in the imperial metropolis. The novel is an embodiment of utopia and dystopia, illusion and disillusion, mystification and demystification, and authenticity and authenticity. The novel discusses the pre- and post-World War II periods which paved way for Caribbean Independence. The novel narrates the life of a young man who creates a self as the culmination of his psychological, intellectual, and moral development. Also, the novel portrays the life of a colonized (especially Caribbean), who is stricken by schizophrenia, alienation, identity crisis, and all the other catastrophes (Çulhaoğlu 89).

Salman Rushdie's *The Midnight's Children* picks up several postcolonial and postmodern elements. The novel is an amalgamation of various themes such as displacement and rootlessness. Rootlessness that occurs due to routelessness is the main source of identity crisis and almost all the major characters suffer from this psychological disease. Therefore, it can be argued that the novel deals with the colonial and post-colonial aspects of India (Tiwari 80).

Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* is first London novel which exposes the predicament of black immigrants in London.

It is a factual retelling of the segregation and dislocation of the black immigrants in London, which acknowledges the need for resistance through independent struggles and mutual help amongst the displaced. The novel presents a constructive analysis of London metropolis (Mgbeadichie 46). Thus, the novel *Lonely Londoners* is marked as a milestone in the decolonization of British tradition.

1.5 DISPLACEMENT EXPERIENCES IN THE SELECTED NOVELS

The novel *Mimic Men* is the story of Ranjit Kripalsingh or Ralph Ranjit Kripalsingh the only son of a Hindu family on the fictional Caribbean island of Isabella who moved to England to continue his studies. After marrying an Indian girl named Sandra, he becomes a successful building contractor and later enter into politics. Once the marriage breaks the protagonist goes back to England and settles down in the boarding house. In the *Mimic Men* the protagonist although emigrated from India to Caribbean, he feels displaced in the Caribbean island. He does not feel a sense of belongingness in the island of Isabella. Often Singh describes his childhood as:

I could scarcely wait for my childhood to be over and done with. I have no especial

hardship or deprivation to record. But childhood was for me a period of incompetence, bewilderment, solitude and shameful fantasies. It was a period of burdensome secrets. (90)

From the above lines it can be senses that the protagonist experiences a sense of displacement. There are several other instances where Singh feels exiled from his homeland. As an immigrant student he feels displaced among the group of other students and wanting to hopelessly to make contact with the city, but unable to do so. Ultimately Singh fails to find his autonomy identity in his real landscape which again constitutes to the displacement experience (Mehni 97). Moreover, Singh is also troubled by the Indianness in the world he is living. Thus, it can be argued that the novel exclusively deals with the theme of displacement.

While the novel *The Lonely Londoners* focuses on the conditions experienced by Caribbean migrants in London after World War II, and the many contradictions and difficulties felt in their urban life. Selvon's novel presents two different images of London. On the one hand, he presents the London of the mind-'ideal London'- and on another hand, the London of the sight-'real London'. The ideal London is far different

from the real London. In other words London of Caribbean when seen at home differs from London of the Caribbean immigrants in London. Here the true color of displacement can be observed. As the novel shows, to the Caribbean at home, London is perceived as a perfect place with its streets paved with gold: ‘...one of those black Jamaicans who coming to London thinking that the streets paved with gold.’ But when witnessed, it turns to a lonely miserable city’ (10). From these lines it can be inferred that the characters undergo the sense of displacement. While in the novel *The Midnight’s Children* Rushdie expresses life of the migrant and explores the universal mystery of being born and the puzzle regarding one’s identity. All the characters in the novel often results in fragmented description of past events. Saleem the protagonist of the novel gets numerous historical events and dates muddled up as he tries desperately to convince his readers that he is at the center of India’s history. There are several other instances in the novel explaining the displacement experiences.

1.6 RESEARCH GAP

The current study thus will analyses and examine the theme of displacement as portrayed in the novels *The Mimic Men*, *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Midnight’s*

Children. Most of the studies discussed on the themes like hybridity, migration, and exile. Hence, the present study will present a comparative analysis of the displacement experiences as portrayed in three different novels written by three different authors.

1.7 CONCLUSION

The study has thus found out that the characters of the novels have strongly experienced the feeling of displacement. It can be concluded that the aims and objectives proposed in the study are fulfilled. The study successfully reviewed and analyzed the themes of displacement in the migrant literature.

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