

Diaspora Literature

Critical Articles



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ISBN-978-81-922645-8-5

- Editors** : Ram Avadh Prajapati
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- Published by** : Takhtotaaz
105-F/4, Sadiyabad, Allahabad-211004
Mob. +91-9839873793
Email- takhtotaaj@gmail.com
www.takhtotaaz.in
- Designed by** : Nand Lal Singh
- Edition** : First - 2016
- Price** : 595 INR, US \$ 35
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Self Attested

The Hijacked Subaltern Voices in V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*

Sunita Dhankhar

Naipaul has often been accused of being the voice of the west, and being unsympathetic to the plight of the former colonial world; in this article the aim is to analyze Naipaul and his ability as writer to delve beneath the surface and emerge as the voice of the subaltern. The problem in reading and interpreting Naipaul is caused by the conflict that arises from what readers and critics expect him to write and what he writes. This is the view point of a 'burdened' reader who desires to impose and restrict the writer in his understanding, interpretation and delineation of the complex, multi-dimensional and diverse postcolonial world. This has led to Naipaul being labeled as a writer who is unsympathetic in his delineation of the post-colonial reality. This placing of the writer in a narrow socio cultural context and binding him based on stereotypes of his historic or cultural background limits the reading of Naipaul's novels. To let his background negotiate into the realm of his writing will lead to a tainting of the experience of reading by the reader.

Dooley says that, "Understanding Naipaul is a matter of empathizing, not theorizing, looking subjectively as he does, rather than objectively, as many of his critics claim to do." (pg.3) Taken in this light we find that the two novels *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* abound with characters that claim to be the voice of the subaltern. These characters occupy the dominant narrative space,