MIGRANCY AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF V. S. NAIPAUL'S NON-FICTIONAL WORKS

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KAFEEL AHMED CHOUDHURY

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Supervisor

Dr. Lalrindiki T. Fanai
Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of English
Mizoram University, Aizawl

Joint Supervisor

Prof. Sivasish Biswas
Head, Dept. of English
Assam University, Diphu Campus
Diphu, karbi Anglong, Assam

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL – 796009
2012

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL - 796009

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DECLARATION

I, Kafeel Ahmed Choudhury, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, and that, the content of this thesis did not form the basis for the award of any previous degree to me or, to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that, the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/institution.

This is being submitted to Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

Dr. Lalrindiki T. Fanai
(**Supervisor)**

Kafeel Ahmed Choudhury
(Candidate)

Prof. Sivasish Biswas
Head, Dept. of English
Assam University, Diphu Campus
(Joint Supervisor)

Dr. Lalrindiki T. Fanai
(**Head, Dept. of English)**

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in this study when primary texts as well as the author's other works have been referred to:

AAD: An Area of Darkness (1964).

AB: Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey (1981).

ABR: A Bend in the River (1979).

AHMB: A House for Mr. Biswas (1961).

AWP: A Writer's People: Ways of Looking and Feeling (2007).

BB: Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples (1998).

HL: Half a Life (2001).

IFS: In a Free State (1971).

IMMN: India: A Million Mutinies Now (1990).

IWC: India: A Wounded Civilization (1977).

LO: Literary Occasions: Essays (2003).

TEA: The Enigma of Arrival (1987).

TMA: The Masque of Africa: Glimpses of African Belief (2010).

TMP: The Middle Passage: A Caribbean Journey (1962).

TMM: The Mimic Men (1967).

TWW: The Writer and the World: Essays (2002).

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

> Migration is a one way trip. There is no "home" to go back to.
>
> — Stuart Hall[1]

I

Since 1980s, the migrant literature has been an area of interest not only in the academia but also in the field of research. Migrant literature primarily refers to the writings by the migrants. The migrant writers produce a kind of literature that mostly deal with the problems of migrancy and its subsequent impact on the migrant people with reference to the crisis of identity and existence itself. The study attempts to negotiate the issues of migrancy both human and literary. An attempt has also been made to deal with the question of identity with regard to the converted people in the non-Arab Muslim world and the migrant people in general.

The question of identity is a much debated and relevant issue in postcolonial and globalized[2] world today. This world has witnessed an unprecedented flow of people, capital and technology. But, the flow of people, goods and resources began with European colonialism which not only conquered other people's lands but also controlled the people,

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[1] Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves" in Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg Ed. *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996: 115.

[2] Globalization is a process by which something becomes global. The term is closely associated with economic globalization—the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign investment, capital flows, migration, the spread of technology, military presence etc. The world which goes through such process can be said to be globalized.

wealth and resources of the conquered lands or the colonies. Consequently, there was movement of people in both directions — from the colonizing 'centre' to colonial 'periphery' and vice versa. For example, the colonizers came and settled in the colonized lands on the one hand, and on the other, they transported the politically powerless and economically impoverished colonial subjects to other parts of the world, mostly from the European colonies as slaves and indentured labourers and they were made to work and produce goods for metropolitan consumptions in the imperial 'center.' However, with decolonization, the movements of people either through forced migration or voluntary exiles of intellectuals from the once colonized lands got accelerated. The past century saw large scale displacement or dispersal of people through forced or voluntary migration to various parts of the world. Thus, once dislocated from the country or place of their origin, the migrants or displaced people undergo traumatic experiences of non-belonging and alienation in the places where they struggle to (re)locate and feel at home. But, sadly, these people can hardly ever (re)locate themselves in that strange/alien place and feel belonged. The migrants, thus, become 'hybrid' individuals due to linguistic and cultural transformations they undergo. Their identity is challenged by the ambivalent nature of their existence that they start wandering with the questions such as "who am I? Where do I belong?" These are the vital questions that need to be answered. So, in order to search the answers to these questions, it is necessary to address the problem(s) of migrancy and identity in the postcolonial context.

Postcolonialism is an important discipline in cultural and literary studies today. As a major force in criticism during the late 1980s and early 1990s, it has played an important role in anti-colonial political movements in the colonized lands. Again, it became a field of intellectual inquiry when the colonial regimes began to disintegrate after the World War II. It analyses the literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination from the day of the first colonial contact to the present, while, on the other, it also

analyses the colonialist and anti-colonialist ideological forces in operation politically, socially, culturally and psychologically — which, on the one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizer's values and, on the other hand, promoted the resistance of colonized people against their oppressors. This study argues how the once colonized people, particularly the colonial migrant intellectuals like V. S. Naipaul who had left the colonies to locate themselves in the metropolitan centers of the world, mimic their colonial masters and try to internalize the values and cultures of the West. Effort has also been made here to analyse the plight of the migrants in general and converted people, the non-Arab Muslims in particular with regard to their identity and existence.

The word 'postcolonial' is a much contested term. It is contested because it is often used with a hyphen in between 'post' and 'colonial' and thereby drawing diverse meanings and attitudes towards colonialism. As far as its current use is concerned, it does not simply mean 'after colonialism' or the period that comes after colonialism or imperialism, it also means the time that begins from the first colonial encounter. It may be true however, that with decolonization, the once colonized lands achieved their independence, but, a large number of those lands could not recover themselves from colonial dependence often termed as colonial hangover or interference till today. There is, however, no proper demarcation between the end of colonialism and the beginning of postcolonialism as none can say exactly when colonialism ended and postcolonialism started. Some scholars opine that some form of colonialism exists even today in the form of political and economic interventions, while others are of the opinion that, postcolonialism begins "from the very first moment of colonial contact" (Ashcroft *et al*, 1995: 117). Again, in the introduction to their influential work *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Bill Ashcroft *et al* have used the term 'post-colonial' (as hyphenated) to cover "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day [since] there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the

historical process initiated by European imperial aggression" (2). They, however, designate the literatures produced from Africa, Australia, Canada, The Caribbean, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and South Pacific island countries as 'post-colonial' literature.Each of these literatures, therefore, has one thing in common beyond their distinctive regional characteristics. Each has "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial." (Ashcroft *et al*, 1989: 2)

Robert C. Young sees 'postcolonialism' as "a body of writing that attempts to shift the dominant ways in which the relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed" (Young, 2003: 2). For Young, shifting of the dominant ways means turning the world upside down as if looking from the other side, for a different and yet significant experience. Postcolonialism, thus, challenges the dominant ways of looking at things mainly from Western point of view. It gives voice to the weak, to the peoples who are in the margins or the periphery. Young, in his book *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (2003), opines that postcolonialism claims the right of all the people on the globe equally. It is, however, unfortunate that due to European colonization and appropriation of power by the West, often referred to as Eurocentrism, the world today is based on two unequal divisions: the West and the rest. Postcolonialism, thus:

> . . . seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave . . . [it] is about changing world . . . It threatens privilege and power. It refuses to acknowledge the superiority of western cultures." (Young, 2003: 7)

Thus, taking Young's definition of postcolonialism into consideration, it can be said that postcolonial literature is subversive because it seeks to intervene and dismantle the knowledge and power structures of both the West and the non-West. It questions the European superiority in knowledge production and at the same time, it critiques the native/non-Western ways of accepting the West's hegemony.

With the decline of the European empires and with decolonization, former colonies in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean became independent. The independence brought the colonizers and the colonized, at par. The once-colonial masters have been decentered (as the colonizers saw themselves at the center of the world, while the colonized were seen at the margins), and thus, the hegemonic power paradigm is subverted. This subversion (which is seen in some countries as independence struggle and resistance against colonial powers), however, in turn, produced a kind of cultural and intellectual vacuum which, in Naipaul's phrase, is produced due to the "overthrow in three continents of established social organizations" (TMM, 2001: 32). This cultural and intellectual vacuum has resulted in voluntary intellectual and political exiles to metropolitan centers of the world, mostly located in the UK and the USA. People like Derek Walcott, Jean Rhys, Ben Okri, George Lamming, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, C. L. R. James, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Richard Rodriguez, Kazuo Ishiguro, Timothy Mo and many others, had left their respective place of birth (mostly former colonies) for better opportunities and became expatriates. They later came to be known as migrant/diasporic writers.

The noted South-African critic and novelist, Elleke Boehmer makes an interesting study of the postcolonial migrant writers. In her seminal work *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature* (1995), she underscores the significant contribution made by the migrant writers in the field of postcolonial literature. It cannot, however, be denied that there is a paradigm shift

in both form and subject-matter since postcolonial literature articulates the voice of the weak and subjugated people as if the empire is writing back. Boehmer, by using Bhabha's terms, observes that the postcolonial migrant writing is the writing of 'not quite' and 'in-between'. She underlines the unprecedented migrations and uprooting of people, not only from former colonies, but also from the countries teeming with internal conflicts, economic hardships, lack of opportunities etc. to the metropolitan centers. As per UN estimation, about 100 million people in the world today qualify as migrants who live as minorities and in the states of non-belonging (Boehmer, 2005: 226). Again, Boehmer rightly notes that cultural creolizations of the migrants have led to linguistic creolization, and as a result, the English language has become a process of mass literary transplantation. Thus, ranging from professional choice (a writing vocation in Naipaul's case) to political exiles, the writers from once-colonized lands have become members of the 21st century "condition of energized migrancy" (Boehmer, 2005: 226). For, Boehmer, therefore, a postcolonial writer in the 21st century, is:

> . . . likely to be a cultural traveller or an 'extra-territorial', than a national. Ex-colonial by birth, 'Third World' in cultural interest, cosmopolitan in almost every other way, she or he works within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a national, ethnic, or regional background." (Boehmer, 2005: 227)

Most of the postcolonial migrant writers fall into the category prescribed by Boehmer. Migrant writers, therefore, undergo a kind of cultural and linguistic translation. Their 'transnational' and 'translational' characteristic features and identity have placed them in the position of 'not quite' or 'in-between.' Their own 'hybridity' due to their cultural translations, argues Boehmer, has made their (migrant) text a "hybrid object" (Boehmer,

2005: 227). This study, therefore, attempts to designate V. S. Naipaul as a postcolonial migrant writer or in Boehmer's term, a 'cultural traveller' who has written no less than thirty books, many of whom, blurring the boundaries of different genres.

Boehmer has identified the postcolonial migrant writer as a cultural traveller. But, migration is different from travel and cannot be applied in a synonymous way. Ian Chambers, in his scholarly work *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (1994), observes that "to travel implies movement between fixed positions, a site of departure, a point of arrival, the knowledge of an itinerary. It also intimates an eventual return, a potential homecoming" (Chambers, 1994: 5) while on the contrary, migrancy "involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable and certain" (Chambers, 1994: 5). Unlike travel, migrancy calls for a 'dwelling' in places, histories, language and identities that are subject to 'mutation' and always in transit, the promise of a homecoming, thus, becomes an impossibility. (Chambers, 1994: 5) On the other hand, beyond the debate of arrival and departure of migrancy and travel, Salman Rushdie considers migration as a universal phenomenon which befalls all mankind. For Rushdie, migration does not only mean displacement of people in history, it refers to a state of displacement that fall on the path of all mankind. In his essay "*Gunter Grass*" in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), Rushdie writes, "We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples." (Rushdie, 1991: 279)

It is commonly known that colonialism has been an important event in the history of human civilization that has affected people's lives in many ways. Almost three quarters of the world population have experienced colonialism and have had their lives shaped or brutally dismantled by it. From time immemorial, there has been a tendency among human societies to expand and strengthen their grip on earth — to territorialize and annex; to conquer other societies not only for political reasons, but also for economic and cultural reasons. Cultural colonization is the other face of colonialism which draws the Eurocentric

belief that the European culture is superior to other non-European cultures. It appropriates superiority of Western culture and civilization and is seen as a standard by which other cultures are to be judged or contrasted. The greatest empires in the world such as the Roman, the Aztec, the Ottoman, the Chinese, the Mughal, the French and the British empires are founded more or less on such principles. However, the modern European Empires, such as the French and the British have gone much beyond the idea of imperialism unlike the Roman, the Aztec, the Chinese, the Ottoman or the Mughal Empires. The French and the British colonialism have been accompanied by the idea of capitalism. Theirs is a kind of colonialism that subjugates the natives or non-Europeans as inferior 'other,' their land and resources are exploited, drained and transported to the 'mother' country, their cultures and values are trampled in order to impose the colonizer's language, culture, values and institutions. Such kind of colonialism or imperialism can be seen as political, economic and cultural subjugation of the colonized societies which Antonio Gramsci would term hegemonization. Western scholars however, argue in favour of the legitimacy of European colonialism and try to appropriate it, as in Rudyard Kipling's words, "The White Man's Burden" to civilize the 'other' i.e. the native or the so-called uncivilized non-Whites.

The colonial encounter has thus, led to the binaries — such as the colonizer and the colonized; the master and the slave; the West and the rest; white and non-white; the Orient and the Occident; the 'self' and the 'other,' the 'centre' and the 'margin' or 'periphery' etc. Such binaries in fact, have come into currency with the publication of Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (1978). The center/periphery binary is a much debated concept in colonial discourse. Said explains this binary as a system that explains both the colonial and postcolonial world. This binary division claims that the colonizing 'center' is the home of science, civilization and development, whereas, the colonized 'periphery' is the home of superstition, barbarity and backwardness. By following this principle, the West or the

colonizing 'center' has tried to appropriate colonialism with a view to 'raise up' the colonized. However, the center/periphery binary logic has been challenged by many postcolonial critics who argue that 'mapping' is a highly subjective and power-determined experience — whose center? and whose periphery? after all, is the crucial question, as the West, since the early eighteenth century, has had the power to arrogate to itself the position of center by making all else peripheral. (Hawley, 2004: 85) Therefore, the most vital question that stirs our mind in today's fragmented and broken world is: "Whose centre, whose periphery?" (Chambers, 1994: 67) as the postcolonial world has seen an ever-growing migration of people from the once-colonized societies (the peripheries) to the metropolitan 'centers' of the world and thereby blurring the boundaries of spatial or geographical differences and even the binary of center/periphery.

It is no exaggeration to say that postcolonial theory and criticism owes much to Said's work that has shown how Orientalism has maintained cultural superiority of the West over the East. In his introduction to *Orientalism*, Said argues that the Orient is a European construct — a space for European representation of the non-European cultures whose people are represented as the stereotyped inferior 'other.' Orientalism, Said maintains, is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 2001: 3). Though the colonizers have left the lands they colonized, but, interestingly, Western *cultural colonization* exists even today in the form of education, culture and values, system of governments etc. In this way, the formerly colonized people are left with a psychological 'inheritance' of a negative self-image which alienates themselves from their own indigenous cultures. Postcolonialism or postcolonial criticism, therefore, also addresses the problems of identity in cultural context since the colonizers saw themselves culturally superior and the colonized as culturally inferior.

Though Said is credited for his pioneering contribution to the emergence of postcolonial criticism, yet, much before Said, Frantz Omar Fanon has dealt with the mechanics of colonialism and its calamitous effect in his influential works — *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Born in 1925 in French Martinique, Fanon's works deal with racial and existential issues that show how identities are formed and maintained. He figures the end of colonialism in a different way, by giving it a psychological twist, and argues that colonialism imprisons the mind as chains imprison the body. The end of colonialism, for him, meant not just political and economic change but it has stamped drastic psychological change in the mind of the colonized. Fanon, thus brings into focus, the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized, the 'self' and the 'other' as he explains the consequences of identity formation for the colonized subject who is forced into the 'internalization' of the self as an 'other.' Chapter III discusses the existential issues of the colonized subjects and the resultant ambivalence in their existence.

The existential dilemma of the colonized subjects including the migrant or the diasporic people in the postcolonial world, gets wide attention in the works of the postcolonial writers. As for culture and identity formation, Said invokes Foucauldian idea of knowledge-power and Marxist critic Raymond William's idea of dominant discourse(s). In his seminal work *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said makes a crucial point saying that imperialism is not only about conquering geographical territories, but it is also about legitimizing it through Western narratives appropriating the 'right' to conquest. The notion is that, in the imperialist's concept, the European culture emerges as superior against the non-European. This is the idea with which V. S. Naipaul is nurtured. Born and brought up in a transplanted British colony in the New World, Naipaul, as a child, had the belief that the "true, pure world" (TMP, 2001: 157) lies elsewhere on the "snow slopes" (TMP, 2001: 157) and not on an island which is "an obscure New World transplantation, second-hand and

barbarous" (TMP, 2001: 127). The notion is that, for him, true culture and civilization rests with the Western world, especially in the metropolitan centre(s) and not in the 'unimportant' and 'barbarous' world of the periphery. Chapter IV is wholly devoted to argue on the civilizational issues in order to critique Naipaul's idea of the 'universal' civilization with the help of Samuel P. Huntington's[3] idea of civilization(s).

Since the purpose of this study is to negotiate the problems of migration, identity, culture and civilization, an attempt has been made here to locate V. S. Naipaul's major non-fictional works not only with contemporary postcolonial situation but also with colonialism itself. The major non-fictional works which have been considered for discussion in the present study are: *The Middle Passage* (1962), *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981), *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), *India: A Million Mutinies Now* ((1990), *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* (1998), *The Writer and the World: Essays* (2002) and *Literary Occasions: Essays* (2003). It is to be noted here that colonialism has shattered the whole world and has disrupted not only the colonized lands but also the colonizers as well. It has dismantled the geo-political, demographic and cultural cartography of the whole world.

II

The term identity can be defined and located in many ways. It is generally defined as a state of being whom or what a person is, and his/her distinctiveness that separates him/her

[3] Samuel P. Huntington is Albert J. Weatherhead III Professor at Harvard and the director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies and chairman of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies. He is widely known for his controversial thesis of "the clash of civilizations" initially published as an article in the Summer 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

from others. It is, in other words, the sense of being or of becoming that distinguishes one from the others. Identity is never fixed or static; it is fluid and always in process. An attempt has been made in this study to locate the 'identity' of the migrants as well as the 'converts' or the non-Arab Muslims by using Amartya Sen's[4] definition of the term in *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (2006) in which he defines human identity as fluid, multidimensional or pluralistic that cannot be confined to a singular identity.

Identity, today, has become a major concern not only for social scientists and psychologists but also for the common humanity as well. Since the time of colonization, there has been an increased mobility of people across the globe. In the postcolonial era, the world has seen unprecedented translocal flows of people, capital and technology, culture and religion. Consequently, people of different cultures and religious background began to mingle and mix and thus creating new spaces of identity and value systems. The question of self and identity has been accelerated by displacement and migration or exile, often voluntary, to different parts of the world. Thus, over the last few decades, since the fall of the empire, there has been a renewed questioning of the self to redefining and relocating the 'identity' due to globalization, cultural homogenization[5], 'hybridity'[6] and ethno-cultural and religious migration.

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[4] Amartya Sen is Lamont University Professor at Harvard and was formerly Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He authored a number of books which include *On Economic Inequality, Development as Freedom, The Argumentative Indian, and Identity and Violence*. He won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998.

[5] Cultural homogenization is said to be the result of globalization. It is the mingling of different cultural practices into one uniform cultural practice that does not allow easy identification of the characteristics of many cultures. As people of two or more cultures interact and intermingle in such a manner that they lose their individual cultural identities and merged into a one uniform culture than does not show any trace of diversity of different cultures among the people.

Some social scientists consider the term ‘identity’ as fluid, changing and multi-dimensional. Due to the increased mobility of people not only across the states but also international boundaries, it has been observed that the identity of a particular man in a particular time and space experiences crisis, often involving threat. It is naturally the threat of identity and existence of the migrant/other subjects submerged in the drive of the dominant class of people who grind the axe of the so-called ‘son of the soil’ and thus problematizing the situation in a society in terms of human relations. He/she becomes either transnational/translocal or an unwanted ‘alien’ and ultimately suffers from a crisis of identity and a sense of alienation.

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen considers ‘identity’ as multi-dimensional or pluralistic. There are a great variety of categories to which an individual simultaneously belongs. One can be at the same time, as Sen argues, without any contradiction, “an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, a historian, a schoolteacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, . . . to all of which this person simultaneously belongs gives her a particular identity.” (Sen, 2006: xiii) Thus, it is evident from Sen’s thesis, that, human identity is pluralistic and cannot be confined to a singular identity. Therefore, a solitarist approach to human identity gives way to misunderstandings among different peoples of the globe which further triggers racial, religious and even civilizational crisis.

The term ‘identity’ is itself very problematic and has varying degrees of scopes and meanings such as — search for identity, loss of identity or the widely used term ‘identity

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[6] The rhetoric of hybridity is fundamentally associated with the emergence of postcolonial discourse. Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) is a key text in the development of hybridity theory as a paradigm of colonial anxiety. The argument is that colonial hybridity, as a cultural form that produced ambivalence not only in the colonized subjects but also in the colonial masters and altered the authority of power.

crisis' etc. In the contemporary world, identities — both personal and national (which include ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, sexual and local) are much contested. There are instances of conflicting identities all over the globe. Kathryn Woodward makes an interesting study of identity in *Identity and Difference* (1997) where she says that "Identities in the contemporary world derive from a multiplicity of sources — from nationality, ethnicity, social class, community, gender, sexuality — sources which may conflict in the construction of identity positions and lead to contradictory fragmented identities" (Woodward, 1997: 1). She argues that one may experience some struggles between conflicting identities based on one's different positions in the world: as a member of a particular community, ethnicity, social class, religion etc. Yet, "identity gives us a location in the world and presents the link between us and the society in which we live . . . [it] gives us an idea who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live" (Woodward, 1997: 1).

Identity is often defined by difference; in other words, it is defined by what it is not. Woodward suggests that identity marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and again, it also marks the ways in which we are different from those who do not (1997: 1-2). Identities are, thus, often constructed in terms of binary oppositions such as — self/other, us/them, insider/outsider, in here/out there, black/white, man/woman, civilized/barbarian etc. Since identities are defined, constructed, consumed and regulated with particular culture or society where meanings are created through "symbolic systems of representation about the identity positions" (Woodward, 1997: 2) within that culture or society. That is why the construction, meaning and representation of identities differ from society to society, civilization to civilization since their culture and value systems differ at large. For example, while the West considers itself 'civilized,' the non-West, as per the principle of opposition, automatically becomes 'uncivilized' or 'barbarian' for them. Their 'self' must be positioned against an 'other,' and their 'centre' must have a 'periphery.' This

study thus, addresses various faces of identity formations, locations and representations, and attempts to negotiate through various non-fictional texts of Naipaul which are not only populated by different migrant people like the author himself but also the 'converted' people in the non-Arab Muslim world as well.

Stuart Hall too makes an interesting study of identity and cultural representation in his brilliant essay "*Cultural Identity and Diaspora*." "Identity," says Hall, "is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, with the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a "production," which is never complete, always in the process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation." (Braziel and Mannur, 2003: 234). According to Hall, there are two kinds of identity — first, identity as 'being' that includes a sense of unity and commonality, and second, identity as 'becoming.' He, however, uses the term in relation to diasporic identities including his own to explain how the first one is a necessary condition while the second one is appropriate in defining postcolonial conditions. To explain the process of identity formation, Hall uses Jacques Derrida's theory of 'difference/differ*a*nce' in support of his argument. For Derrida, 'difference' is not exactly 'otherness.' With him, 'difference' becomes 'differ*a*nce' where meaning is always deferred for endless 'signs' or significations. His sense of 'difference' challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation, and show how meaning is never finished or completed, but moves on to carry other extended meanings. Therefore, an attempt has been made here in this study to show that identities are never fixed; they are constantly in the process of making and unmaking especially while dealing with the identity of the 'converted' people. Naipaul's assessment of the identity of these people is based on solitarist approach which formulates only a fixed, singular identity. Chapter II discusses this issue while covering not only the 'converted' people but also the identity of the migrant people as well.

III

One of the most important writers of literary diaspora, V. S. Naipaul was born in Chaguanas, near Port of Spain, Trinidad, in August 17, 1932 in a family of Indian indentured immigrants. His grandfather migrated from the poverty-stricken eastern Uttar Pradesh to Trinidad in the 1880s. It was at a time when, after the abolition of slavery, there was urgent need of cheap labourers for the British plantation colonies throughout the world. These indentured labourers were then transplanted from one part of the British Empire to another — from one hemisphere to another. It was a traumatic experience for these migrants who have left their homes behind for an unknown world in order to change their fortunes and to get rid of the curse of poverty and misfortune in their native land. This population transfer or transplantation was a colonial enterprise for the benefit of the colonizers. First, they had drained the wealth of the colonies to export them to their 'mother' country by making the colonized land(s) impoverished, and then they had taken advantage of the poverty and distress (which Naipaul terms as 'darkness' in *An Area of Darkness*) of the colonized subjects and transplanted them in an alien land. In that strange and unknown world, these migrants had to suffer from the trauma of the memories of past which they had left behind in India and therefore, have suffered from a sense of non-belonging or homelessness and identity crisis. The miserable plight of these migrants is to be discussed in detail in both Chapters II and III.

Naipaul's grandfather was an indentured labourer who worked in the sugar cane fields in Trinidad. But, as he was a Brahmin whose family in India abounded with pundits, he wished his son Seepersad (Naipaul's father) to become a pundit; but the latter could only become a journalist. Naipaul's two other uncles continued working in the cane fields. Naipual inherited from his father, the wish to read, the wish to write and become a writer. His

father, Seepersad Naipaul was a self-educated man who wished to be a writer, but the condition and the limited opportunities in the plantation colony did not permit him to realize his dream. Hence, he wished his son V. S. Naipaul to cherish the idea of a writing vocation. For Naipaul, their colonial island was not suitable to pursue that kind of vocation. Therefore, it was necessary to get away, since the wish to be a writer and the literature that had given him the wish, “came from another world, far away from [their] own” (LO, 2003: 106).

One of the most important aspects of postcolonial writing is the emergence of migrant writers from the former colonies. These writers tend to formulate new spaces of identities. Most of these migrant writers have (re)located themselves in the metropolitan centers of the world, mostly in the UK and the USA, mainly after the World War II, as an ever-growing literary diaspora. These writers have produced a type of literature that deals with burning postcolonial issues such as — migration, exile, displacement, ethno-cultural hybridity, marginality, sexuality, homogenization, homelessness and loss/crisis of identity etc. As stated before, the postcolonial migrant writers including V. S. Naipaul, who, in spite of their personal, cultural, linguistic and artistic differences, share one common similarity: the experience of diaspora.

Etymologically, the word ‘diaspora’ is derived from the Greek word *diasperien* which means ‘to scatter across.’ The term also has a religious connection as it refers to the dispersal of the Jews from Palestine. In the contemporary discourse, it is used as an umbrella term to refer to the “displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile” (Braziel and Mannur, 2003: 1). An attempt has been made in this study to show how the migrant people suffer from the problems of alienation and identity crisis in a diasporic space.

Migration, diaspora, displacement and problem of identity are major issues in contemporary cultural discourse. The uprooting and dispersal of people from former colonies

to various parts of the world and especially to the metropolitan centers, have given new meanings to the idea of diaspora. Thus, the narratives of migrancy and diaspora provide enough productive space for postcolonial 'resistance' with the (dis)location of postcolonial intellectuals in the metropolitan centers of the world. The narratives of migrancy and diaspora, as part of the metropolitan discourse, in Homi Bhabha's phrase, substantiates the idea of the 'in-between' or the 'liminal' in the diasporic space. Hence, lately, some writers of colonial background try to display through their work, the nature of their diasporic identity which is often paradoxical. V. S. Naipaul is one such writer who, being in voluntary exile in metropolitan London, tries to (re)locate himself and (re)construct his identity. However, the fact is that, by attempting to erase his past, he makes futile attempts to identify and to place himself not only in metropolitan England but also in Trinidad, his place of birth and then in India, his ancestral country. To use Bhabha's term, he is rather trapped in 'in-determinacy' or 'in-betweenness.' Or, we might say, he transcends ambivalence and therefore, becomes diasperactive. For example, in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967), the protagonist Ralph Ranjit Kripal Singh is a character who feels himself 'shipwrecked' not only in his own island Isabella but also in metropolitan London. Ralph Singh, in many aspects, resembles Naipaul. As an exile in London, his position and identity constantly vacillates and he finds himself homeless and placeless in that indeterminate zone. This 'in-betweenness' works as a metaphor for place/non-place, border/borderless, home/homeless, identity/non-identity in postcolonial situation. Critics opine that the discourse of migrancy and diaspora in postcolonial/postmodern studies which emphasize mostly the mental or psychological process of migration, 'dematerialize' the migrant into an 'abstract' thing. The individual, thus, has a sense of either multiple belonging or non-belonging, and this happens due to the ceaseless movement of people (labour), capital and (information) technology in this age of

globalization and late capitalism. Therefore, it becomes difficult to attach and identify someone to a particular/fixed identity and culture.

In his essay “*Minimal Selves*,” Stuart Hall, while sharing his own sense of identity as a migrant in a postmodern concept, says that, it (identity) always depends on the idea of being a migrant and the idea of difference from the rest in one’s self. So, in the postcolonial or postmodern age, while the people feel themselves dispersed, the migrant ironically finds himself/herself centered. For the postcolonial migrant, centering implicates locating himself or herself in the imperial capital in Western metropolis which he/she believes to be the center of learning, power, science and civilization. As a member of the black diaspora in England, Hall, himself finds this migranthood as a kind of “coming home” (Baker *et al*, 1996: 114). It is a puzzling fact that, though the black people in London are marginalized, fragmented, unenfrenchized, disadvantaged, and dispersed, yet, they look as if they own the territory (Baker *et al*, 1996: 114). The fact is that, ironically enough, despite every other deprivation, they are ‘centered’ and occupied a new kind of ‘space’ at the center. One has to wonder about the identity of these (black) people in this migrant situation where it is both impossible and absurd for them to lay claim on certain portions of the earth which is not theirs.

Hall argues that every migrant has to face a twofold question: “Why are you here?” and “when are you going back home?” Interestingly, no migrant can ever answer to the second question. The migrant, however, knows in his/her deep sense, that it is impossible to go back. As quoted from Hall in the beginning of this chapter, who observes that — “migration is a one-way trip and there is no “home” to go back to” (Baker *et al*, 1996: 115). In fact, says Hall, there never was any home. Even for Hall, there is no proper answer to the first question either — one may however, say that he/she has migrated for ‘education,’ for ‘children’s sake,’ for ‘better life and opportunities’ etc. Hall, however, discloses the truth saying that “I am here because it’s where my family is not. I really came here to get away

from . . ." (Baker *et al*, 1996: 115). This is the universal story of life, as Hall observes: one is where one is to try and get away from somewhere else. To be here is not to be there. For some, it may be to get away from his mother (as Hall did), which he terms as an "endless evasion of patriarchal family life" (Baker *et al*, 1996: 115), and for others, it may be for better life and opportunities when someone feels himself/herself 'shipwrecked' in his/her place as it happens in the case of Naipaul.

For Naipaul, the transplanted British island in which he was born, was very small — for him, it was "unimportant" and "only a dot on the map of the world" (TMP, 2001: 36). Hence, their interest was all in the outside world, since their little world of remembered India was disintegrating and fading away from their memories with the passing of time. They were being slowly swallowed up by the creolized colonial society of Trinidad. Their life within the community and within the section of their extended family had always been unsettled. From such a world, Naipaul always wanted to escape; wanted to get away from the place where they felt that they have been 'shipwrecked.' Perhaps, the geographical smallness of their island, together with the smallness of their own community, has created a sense of alienation in them. Thus, the desire to get away becomes possible only through the colonizer's language and education. A hard-won scholarship ultimately had taken him out of the 'shipwrecked' island when he decided to go to Oxford to study English literature. However, this journey to England was not for a degree, it was only to get away. In his essay "*Reading and Writing"* published in a collection of essays under the title *Literary Occasions* (2003), Naipaul says:

> I decided to go to Oxford and do the three-year English course. I didn't do this for the sake of Oxford and the English course; I knew little enough about either. I did it mainly to get away to the bigger world and give myself time to live up to my fantasy and become a writer. (LO, 2004: 12)

In another essay "*Prologue to an Autobiography"* published in the same collection, Naipaul repeats the same: "I decided to use mine [scholarship] to do English at Oxford. I didn't want a degree; I wanted only to get away . . ." (LO, 2004: 77).

The migration of Naipaul's grandparents had been a kind of compulsion, and not wholly voluntary as these people had accepted this transplantation for their survival. More importantly, in this transfer of population from one part of the empire to the other, the involvement of the colonizer's interest cannot be ignored. For example, the Indian indentured labourers who were transplanted and juxtaposed with the African Negro slaves (who were set free after the abolition of slavery) in the New World, was done for the interest of the colonizers who needed cheap labour for the plantations in the British colonies. It, however, had calamitous effect of cultural translocation through geographical transplantation on these uprooted people. Hence, these migrants are unquestionably the victims of colonization. On the other hand, unlike his forefathers, Naipaul's is a kind of voluntary exile in order to locate himself in a larger world. Naipaul is doubly displaced; for example, the first is through his ancestral migration and the second is his own migration to the metropolitan 'centre' of the world for better life and opportunities.

From his very childhood, Naipaul had the wish to be a writer, the wish that came from his father. The colonial disorder, racial prejudices and lack of opportunities, together with the climatic 'unpleasantness' of the island have compelled him to escape to a world that he cherished in his heart, a place which they believed to be the source of all knowledge and books that they handled in their island. They, as migrants, had been leading an unsettled life where, as Naipaul says, it was difficult to pursue a writing vocation. He wished to be a writer, yet, he could not be the one like a metropolitan writer. Unlike the metropolitan writers, he had no knowledge of the past since the past of their community ended abruptly with their grandfathers and beyond that they could not see (LO, 2004: 20).

Moreover, in his essay "*Conrad's Darkness and Mine*," Naipaul regrets that "the great novelists wrote about highly organized societies [and he] had no such society" (LO, 2004: 168). Hence, "to become a writer, that noble thing," Naipaul "had thought it necessary to leave" (LO, 2004: 79). He leaves his island for London at the age of eighteen in the year 1950 and since then, he has been living in England. For, Naipaul as a migrant, who becomes one of the greatest writers in English literature in contemporary era, his migration, as Hall has pointed out, is a 'one way trip' and there is no 'home' for him to go back to. Like any other migrant, he is unable to attach himself neither to the country of his birth, Trinidad nor to the country of his ancestors, India which he considers to be a public toilet. He writes in his first Indian travelogue — "Indians defecate everywhere. They defecate, mostly, beside the railway tracks. But they also defecate on the beaches; they defecate on the hills; they defecate on the river banks, they defecate on the streets; they never look for cover." (AAD, 2002: 70)

The migrant writers being uprooted from their cultural and ethnic origins, yet struggling in between the cultural root or past and the diasporic location, have assumed a kind of cultural plurality, in the place of 'hybridity' where, in Bhabha's terms, they are destined to suffer from an acute sense of 'un-homeliness' or 'in-betweenness.' Thus, migration or displacement, location of culture and search for identity are the main issues or themes in the works of these writers. Naipaul's works, like most of his contemporary writers of literary diaspora, deal with such burning postcolonial issues. His works which comprise of fiction, non-fiction and a number of genre-defying books convey the message of the problems of (re)location, alienation, marginalization, homelessness and identity of the postcolonial migrant and his perpetual struggle for existence. The migrant or the exiled becomes stranded in that space, a limbo of non-belonging, which may be called, again in Bhabha's term, as the 'third space' where he is in a constant struggle to assert/locate his culture and identity. Among other important themes in Naipaul's non-fictional works of non-

Arab Muslim and sub-continental settings are: first, converted Muslims in the non-Arab world suffer from identity crisis since they have erased their past with their conversion to the 'imported' Arab faith (a detailed discussion on the issue of identity of the converted people is carried in chapter II) and due to the 'colonization' that had come with that Arab faith; second, the migrant and the marginalized people suffer from insecurity and identity crisis amidst the alien and dominant class of people respectively.

Most of Naipaul characters are either uprooted migrants or alienated outsiders who are trapped in the labyrinth of displacement and multiple identities. The protagonists who are often in the guise of the writing self are mostly members of marginalized communities whose colonial background, together with self-imposed exile or migration, have resulted in their uncertainties of 'place' and 'identity.' More so, for some ambitious ones like Naipaul himself, it is a journey from the "periphery to the center" (TWW, 2003: 507) for a writing career and for a larger metropolitan audience.

Naipaul has authored no less than thirty books comprising of both fiction and non-fiction. Yet a number of his books cannot be strictly placed under a particular genre since his fictional writings abound in journalistic reportages while his non-fictional writings are marked with significant fictional elements as he allows his characters to speak out their own stories which are notably managed or reshaped and fabricated by the author himself. There are a number of Naipaul critics who designate his non-fictional works as "non-fiction novel" (cited in Khan, 1998: 6) with elements of both fiction and journalism that became popular in the late twentieth century as a popular genre. It is worth mentioning that throughout his career, Naipaul has engaged himself in search of a proper form of writing. His early works display a West Indian style of English, a kind of creolized English — suitable for the theme, location and plot of those early works. But, since the late 70s, he has been experimenting on a different style which can be termed as fictional journalism in most of his travel writings.

In his long writing career covering a span of almost six decades, as he his productive till today, Naipaul has received a number of prizes and honors which includes the highest and the most prestigious Nobel Prize for literature in 2001, are listed as under:

▪ 1958: John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize.

▪ 1961: Somerset Maugham Award.

▪ 1964: Hawthornden Prize.

▪ 1968: W. H. Smith Award.

▪ 1971: Booker Prize.

▪ 1983: Jerusalem Prize.

▪ 1986: T. S. Eliot Award.

▪ 1990: Knighted by the British Queen (Naipaul does not use it); Awarded Trinity Cross.

▪ 1993: David Cohen British Literature Prize.

▪ 2001: Nobel Prize for Literature.

There are plenty of scholarly works already done on Naipaul which mainly focus on his journey for the making of a writer, his exile and homelessness, and his quest for order and identity. One of the first critics of Naipaul, Landeg White, in her book *V. S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction* (1975), explores the development of a young writer at his early forties whose whole career is centered on the uncertainties of his own position as a migrant in London, his struggle against the problems of displacement and homelessness. In another scholarly work *Naipaul's Truth: The Making of a Writer* (2001), Lillian Feder explores Naipaul's commitment as an author who delivers the 'truth' by writing extensively about the enduring economic, cultural and psychological effects of colonialism and its subsequent impact on human identity. But, Feder's work sounds more as a literary biography which analyses different genres of Naipaul's writings and his making of a literary genius. N. Ramadevi, in her book *The Novels of V. S. Naipaul: Quest for Order and Identity* (1996),

analyses Naipaul's quest for identity and order, mainly in his novels of colonial or 'Third World' setting. Her work also focuses on Naipaul's creative writing which traces the historical and psychological causes of futility, disorder and his quest for identity in the postcolonial world. In her seminal work *V. S. Naipaul* (1995), Fawzia Mustafa explores the major works of V. S. Naipaul, starting with *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) to *A Way in the World* (1994), where she addresses literary, historical, political and cultural issues. In this introductory critical work, Mustafa neatly examines various postcolonial issues and introduces general debates about postcolonial literary production and its narrative techniques, language, gender, race, class and canon formation. In the non-fictional arena, particularly Naipaul's three Indian travelogues — *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), Namrata R. Mahanta tries to explore the diasporic consciousness in Naipaul and his problematic equation with India in her acclaimed work *V. S. Naipaul: The Indian Trilogy* (2004). However, not much work is done on the issue of migrant's identity and most importantly, on the identity and existence of the converted peoples in the non-Arab Muslim world and in the Indian subcontinent.

The present study, however, attempts to go beyond the surface level of postcolonial crises of disorder, homelessness, alienation and identity crisis. Attempt has been made to negotiate the problems of migrancy and identity with special reference to Naipaul's non-fictional works. This study therefore, aims to argue mainly on three important issues: (1) problems of migrancy and its subsequent effects resulting into identity crisis, alienation, homelessness and ambivalence of one's existence; (2) identity and role of the converted peoples in the non-Arab Muslim world who are alleged to be leading a life of double moral standard and who are said to be doubly removed from their origin, culture and identity; and (3) civilizational issues of whether to accept the West as a 'universal civilization' and how Naipaul responds to other civilizations, particularly the civilization of Islam.

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CHAPTER - II

THE CRISIS OF IDENTITY

> . . . identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty.
>
> — K. Mercer[7]

I

The problem of identity is one of the burning issues of today's postcolonial world. Due to the movement/transfer of labour and capital, people all over the globe since the time of colonization, became the victims through manpower transplantation and voluntary or forced migration across the geo-political boundaries. Therefore, one big question always haunts the migrant: "Who am I?" (BB, 2005: 395). The preceding arguments about the nature of identity and its formation will help to critique Naipaul's ideas and approach to human identity, especially the identity of the 'converted' Muslims of four non-Arab Islamic nations: Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia and the subcontinent. An attempt has also been made to negotiate the migrant identity with reference to the texts mentioned earlier which deal with the problems of the migrant people in general.

Naipaul's assessment of human identity, as defined in the preceding chapter, fails to recognize a person's simultaneous plural identities. He has ventured to judge people on the basis of a singular identity. His own identity vacillates between his Indian Hindu Brahmin ancestry with a stigma of indentured labour and his own homeless, hybridized and uncertain

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[7] Kobena Mercer, "Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics" in J. Rutherford ed. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990: 43.

position in the world. He grew up in a British plantation colony in the Caribbean as a third generation Indian migrant. The multi-racial Creole society of Trinidad and the postcolonial disorder together with the smallness of the community of the Indians, posed a threat on the identity of the self and the writer, a vocation to be achieved as a lifetime ambition. The desire to 'escape' to the metropolitan and literary centre of the world thus becomes an obsession to the colonial subject.

Naipaul's ancestors as Hindu Brahmins, had brought with them a miniature India with all its religious rituals and caste/class distinctions. Naipaul, a third generation migrant, however, since his childhood, doesn't have religious faith or curiosity. He says, "I was without religious faith myself. I barely understood the rituals and ceremonies I grew up with . . . my Hinduism was really an attachment to my family" (AB, 2003: 12). His denial of having any religious faith reverberates even in his essay, "*Our Universal Civilization*" published in his collection of essays, *The Writer and the World: Essays* (2002) where he rejects the idea of Hinduism he grew up with vis-à-vis the Christian precept of human behaviour and consolation. Yet, his upper-caste Hindu sensibility and identity comes to his rescue during his early barren days in England (after the university and scholarship) when he decides to discover his 'roots.' His search for roots takes him back after a gap of eleven years, to Trinidad, the country of his birth and then to India, the country of his ancestors. The fatal outcome of the journeys back home will be discussed in the later part of this chapter.

II

The identity of the converted peoples in the non-Arab Islamic societies in Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia, as assessed by Naipaul, seems to be Eurocentric and exhibit his lack of knowledge of the Muslims and Islam as a whole. He himself tells about his

limited knowledge of Islam in *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981), that, what he knew about Islam was “Known to everyone on the outside” (AB, 2003: 12). It implies that he knew very little of Islam. The limited extent of his knowledge of Islam is expressed in this way: “they had a Prophet and a Book; they believed in one God and disliked images; they have an idea of heaven and hell — always a difficult idea for me” (AB, 2003: 12). He has misjudged the identity of the Muslims, especially the ‘converted’ Muslims. He has tried to homogenize the racial and religious identity and at the same time ignored all other important simultaneous identities. For him, Muslim/Islamic identity is a singular identity; but he misses the point that the Muslim/Islamic identity is only a religious identity, a particular identity out of different and simultaneous other identities of a particular person. For example, a Muslim in Indonesia is firstly an Indonesian, then a Javanese, a Sumatran or Malay etc. who, at the same time, belongs to a *kampong* (village) or a city. A person’s religious identity is not the only identity he/she bears; there are many other affiliations a person simultaneously beholds which certainly include his/her religious identity. The religious identity of a person is not after all his/her “all-encompassing and exclusive identity” (Sen, 2006: 14).

For instance, the creation of Pakistan as a separate state for the Muslims of the subcontinent, as Naipaul points out, in reality, could not accommodate all the Muslims of the subcontinent. Truly speaking, it was not at all a good idea and the trauma of the partition still exists. Sir Mohammad Iqbal[8] with his dream for a ‘Muslim polity’ and a few others with Islamic ‘fantasy’ and ‘passion’ as Naipaul calls it excluded the vast majority of Muslims of the subcontinent who never wanted partition. There were not one but many factors

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[8] Sir Mohammad Iqbal was a scholar, philosopher and a distinguished Urdu poet who was born in Sialkot (now Pakistan) in British India and later became the national poet of Pakistan after the partition. He was a strong proponent of political and spiritual revival of Islam and its civilization. It is said that his visions and inspirations had led to the creation of Pakistan.

responsible for the partition. Consequently, millions of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs of both sides and the frontiers were displaced. There was mass exodus mainly in the Punjab province in the west and Bengal in the east. The argument is, Naipaul misreads and misrepresents the converted Muslims and their problems. The 'fantasy' he invents among the non-Arab Muslims, is in fact, the outburst of the fantasy within him. The 'fantasy' which Naipaul discovers, in the words of Mr. Jaffrey, the Pakistani migrant in Iran in *Among the Believers*, who is in favour of an 'ethnically cleansed' society of believers, is the fantasy for an all-Muslim state or "*jame towhidi*" (AB, 2003: 34). But, again, Mr. Jaffrey is against the 'rule of Ali' or the Ayatollahs; he wants the mullahs back to the mosques, while the administrators are to run the government. As a Shia from Lucknow, he always had a dream, as Naipaul underpins, to be among the Muslims as a Muslim, a Shia among the Shias. He first goes to Pakistan where, as a Shia and a *Mohajir* (refugee/stranger) like others, who migrated from India, he feels unhappy and subsequently he migrates to Iran. But the Islamic revolution in Iran does not fulfill his dream; he is anguished in Ayatollah Khomeini's rule, which is for him, a usurpation of power from the so-called "facist" (AB, 2003: 10) Shah Abbas. In his words, "Every kind of corruption had come to Iran during the Shah's rule: money corruption, prostitution, sodomy" (AB, 2003: 43) and, for which, Islam could be the right answer. On the other hand, he wants democratic rule by politicians and not by Ayatollahs and thus, his 'round trip' comes to an end when he leaves Iran for Pakistan, secretly at night with his American Chevrolet. Had it been only Muslim fantasy, Mr. Jaffrey would have stayed in Iran. Likewise, far off, Bangladesh would not have been created; the former East Pakistan, present Bangladesh with a vast population sharing the same religious identity, came into existence only because of its distinct racial and linguistic identity and not out of 'Islamic fantasy' or 'Muslim passion' as presumed by Naipaul.

In his books on Islamic excursions, Naipaul has tried to emphasize that the 'converted' Muslims suffer from identity crisis because their past have been 'erased,' their history 'alters' and by 'rejecting their own' they become whether they like it or not, a "part of the Arab story" (BB, 2005: 1). Therefore, a convert, as Naipaul believes, has to turn away from everything that is his: "people develop fantasies about who and what they are; and in the Islam of converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism" (BB, 2005: 1). It is to be noted here that Naipaul undertakes his Islamic journey in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. It was the time when American diplomats were kept hostages after the students seized the American Embassy in Teheran. Islam, therefore, becomes an object of curiosity followed by an unprecedented anti-Islamic hysteria in the West, particularly in the US. Many critics believe that Naipaul's anti-Islamic prejudice or his 'Islamophobia' (a term often used by Naipaul critics) is not sudden. It has taken its root even in his childhood when the innocent mind was contaminated by the prejudice of the elders towards a particular religious community of people, the people of the same race but with religious difference. Naipaul's ancestors had brought with them not only the miniature India with all its religious rituals and ceremonies, as mentioned earlier, they also had brought with them caste feelings and Hindu-Muslim religious antagonism with them. That is why at an early age, Naipaul comes to understand that "Muslims were somewhat more different than others. They were not to be trusted; they would always do you down" (AAD, 2002: 25). In a Muslim neighbour's cap and grey beard, an idea or an image of Muslim identity is constructed as such that in his "especial difference, lay every sort of threat" (AAD, 2002: 26). Racial hatred has existed across the countries in different communities. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1600), Shylock accuses Antonio of spitting on his Jewish gabardine. Possibly, Naipaul's appropriation of Eurocentrism takes him beyond the Hindu-Muslim cliché, and his antagonism towards Islam and Muslims is coloured by his

appropriated identity. A question lingers — was Naipaul politically correct at the historical juncture of a new West vs. Muslim world crusade? It is notable that his Nobel comes just after 9/11. Moreover, Naipaul, already a reporter of the so-called Third World to the West, with his role as a native informant as Gayatri C. Spivak maintains, he has been viewed by many scholars as one who raises a native voice against the fellow natives perhaps due to his collaboration with the West and its standards. Aijaz Ahmad, on the other hand, observes that the metropolitan immigrants' construction of Third World images lacks proper grounding and is merely a kind of "opportunistic Third World-ism" (Ahmad, 1992: 86). Thus, after viewing the interviews given by some Iranians on American television about Islamic Revolution in Iran, he then decides to travel to certain Muslim countries. In fact, Naipaul's exploration of the non-Arab Islamic societies is a kind of journalistic reporting based on superficial assumptions. He is obsessed with the so-called cultural confusion in the non-Western world, especially the non-Arab Muslim world and the growth of Islam in particular, as a global power challenging the West.

Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey is a record of Naipaul's seven-month journey to four non-Arab Islamic nations: Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia. He himself tells in this book, the purpose of his visit to those nations: "to see Islam in action" (AB, 2003: 119) and "to find out about the application of Islam to institutions, to government, to law" (AB, 2003: 129). His second book of Islamic excursion, *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples* (1998), a sequel to the former, is a commentary on the identity of the 'converted' Muslims in those non-Arab Muslim countries. He is more critical and pungent in this book. He writes:

> Islam is in its origins an Arab religion. Everyone not an Arab who is a Muslim is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's world view alters. His holy places are in

> Arab lands; his sacred language is Arabic. His idea of history alters. He rejects his own; he becomes, whether he likes it or not, a part of the Arab story. (BB, 2005: 1)

The identity of a non-Arab Muslim, as Naipaul puts it, is that of a 'convert' which is rigorously debatable because out of 1.5 billion Muslims (who constitute about 23% of the world population) in the globe, over 100 million are non-Arab Muslims who have been categorized by Naipaul as 'converts.' Thus, it is evident that almost seventy percent of the total numbers of Muslims in the globe are non-Arab Muslims who are mainly residing in South and South East Asia while the rest are Arab Muslims living in the Arab world. It is perhaps wrong on the part of Naipaul to judge the non-Arab Muslims (the converts) as inferior or impure because their holy places lie in the Arab lands since Islam, according to him, is an Arab religion and one who is not an Arab is a convert. Commenting on such a generalization of non-Arab Muslims as 'converts,' Amin Malak[9] points out that there is no "rational foundation" (Malak, 2006) for such categorization by Naipaul. Malak argues that all existing religions must have been founded. He adds that, like Islam, Christianity also had Semitic origin and one can claim that the Christians of Europe and America are 'converts.' It is possible that some day Naipaul might even categorize them as 'converts.' As Christianity evolved from its origin to a world religion, Malak finds no wrong with Islam becoming a world religion (Malak, 2006). Islam is neither a religion only of the Arabs nor its holy places are restricted to Arab lands; all mosques and shrines are holy for a Muslim whether they are in India, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, UK, USA or Saudi Arabia. Islam is a religion meant for the whole mankind and not for/of the Arabs only. A few quotes from the *The Holy Qura'n* will be enough in support of this argument. *The Holy Qura'n* says, "O mankind! Worship your

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[9] Amin Malak is a Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Grant MacEwan College, Edmonton, Canada.

Lord who hath created you and those before you so that you may ward off (evil).” (Pickthall, 1988: Part 2, 21) *The Holy Qura’n* further says, “Lo! We have revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the scripture for mankind with truth” (Pickthall, 1988: Part 24, 41); and “We have sent thee (Muhammad) as a bringer of good tidings and a Warner unto all mankind but most of them know not” (Pickthall, 1988: Part 22, 28). So, *The Holy Qura’n* addresses to the whole mankind and not the Arabs only as Naipaul perceives due his limited knowledge of Islam. Or again, *The Holy Qura’n* says elsewhere, “O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another” (Pickthall, 1988: Part 26, 13). There are lot of examples and instances in *The Holy Qura’n* which proves that Islam is a universal religion revealed for the whole mankind. As far as the holy places are concerned, it is true that the Muslims throughout the world make *Haj* pilgrimage to *Makkah* (Mecca) in Saudi Arabia. Makkah is famous for *Ka’ba* (masjid-e H`aram, the first mosque in the world, according to Islamic faith, which was built by Adam and later rebuilt by Ibrahim with his son Ismail) which is the *qiblah* (direction) for *sala’h* (prayer) so that the Muslims throughout the globe can have a unanimous and universal agreement for establishing common unity and brotherhood.

While looking at the decayed Mughal monuments and Shalimar garden in Lahore in Pakistan, Naipaul finds it ironical for a country claiming itself as a “successor to Mogul power” and “Islamic identity” (BB, 2005: 274). Naipaul, however, rightly makes the general lack of education of the people of Pakistan responsible for this; but, in the next sentence, surprisingly and unconvincingly, he puts the blame on the Muslim convert’s attitude to the land where he lives. He goes even further saying that “to the convert his land is of no religious or historical importance; its relics are of no account; only the sands of Arabia are sacred” (BB, 2005: 274). It is to be understood here, that, Naipaul, like an Orientalist (as Edward Said has pointed out in *Orientalism*), only constructs Muslim negative stereotypes.

He judges people and even views them according to his own ‘worldview’ and ‘uncertain’ position. He views his land of birth as only a “dot on the map of the world” (TMP, 2001: 36; AWP, 2007: 3) and as an “uncreative” and “cynical” (TMP, 2001: 34) land. His lack of love, sympathy and devotion to his island is even furthered when he leaves Trinidad at the age of 18. That is why he goes to the extent of calling it ‘unimportant’ and ‘cynical’ as mentioned earlier. To take the argument further, a quote from *The Mimic Men* (1967) will help in this regard. The readers can understand that this book has so much autobiographical significance. Isabella is an imaginary island which can be applied to Trinidad and the protagonist Ralph Singh is an embodiment of the colonial politician and a writer of memoirs who believes that “the first requisite for happiness [is] to be born in a famous city” (TMM, 2002: 127). That is why he comes to a scathing remark that “to be born on an island like Isabella, [can be applied to Trinidad] an obscure New World transplantation, second hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder” (TMM, 2002: 127). He tells us that he had sensed this from an early age, and had always the desire to ‘escape,’ to get away from the ‘shipwrecked’ island where ‘accident’ had placed him.

As quoted earlier, Naipaul says that a ‘convert’ rejects his own and whether he likes it or not becomes a ‘part of the Arab story’ due to Islam’s ‘imperial demands.’ Mohamed Bakari[10] writes in his article “*V. S. Naipaul: From Gadfly to Obsessive*,” that “all ideologies whether social, political, economic or religious, are in essence totalizing in their demands from their adherents . . . This is certainly not unique in Islam. It is equally true of fascism, capitalism and socialism, Hinduism or Zionism.” (*Alternatives*, 2003: 253). Likewise, Purabi Panwar, in an introduction to an anthology of recent criticism on Naipaul, shares a similar view by saying that what Naipaul “conveniently ignores [about Islam despite its Arab origin] is that large numbers of non-Arab Muslims have not rejected their ‘history and heritage,’ and

[10] Mohamed Bakari is a Professor of English Literature and Language at Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey.

that Islam has adapted to different countries of converts, assimilating their local customs, traditions, languages and cultures. He in fact erases the difference between Islam and Islamic fundamentalism, and uses them as interchangeable terms which they are not" (Panwar 20). Naipaul puts the blame on Islam only. It is due to his limited knowledge of Islam. The leftist Behzad, Naipaul's guide in Iran, himself a man without faith, who is not taught by his parents, the Islamic way of life; who doesn't go to mosque; a Muslim only in name, is bound to give only wrong information about Islam. Or if we take Mr. Jaffrey, the Shia migrant from Lucknow via Pakistan to Iran, a man looking for a "society of believers" still does not observe fasting in the month of Ramadan; a dish of "fried eggs" and a plate of "*pappadom"* occupy his desk (AB, 2003: 33). The Bahai co-passenger on the flight to Teheran, critical of the Iranian revolution as 'terrible,' gives Naipaul only a biased and racist opinion about the Muslims: "these Muslims are a strange people. They have *old* mentality. Very *old* mentality. They are bad to minorities" (AB, 2003: 20). Thus, the construction of Islamic/Muslim identity, on the part of Naipaul, seems to be based on superficial information and at the same time, a game of words and phrases. In fact, the Bahais, though of handful numbers they are, a 'divergent' community in Iran, are well off as a community like the Ahmadias (a minority community) in Pakistan, or the Chinese in Malaysia. The Chinese are, in fact, economically sounder than the Malay Muslims. The truth is that, from his very childhood Naipaul has learnt to be conscious about race and class; since they belonged to the transplanted peasant Indian community in the New World, the people outside the insulation of the community and the house (where the Indian rituals and religious practices prevailed like the one at his grandmother's house), remained alien and isolated. Hanuman House in *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) is a relevant example. Such kind of racial and class division as employed by Naipaul has been critiqued by Fawzia Mustafa[11] who rightly points out that Naipaul

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[11] Fawzia Mustafa is an Associate Professor of English at Fordham University at Lincon Center, New York,

insistently employs ‘racial’ and ‘class divisions’ saying that his identification of class and racial demarcations and categorizations are based on classicist and uncertain reflections and hence, his racial demarcations are not appropriate. For example, when so many people during his journey appear to him as racially ‘pure’ stock, Mustafa points out that Naipaul uses his ‘racial eye’ as a substitute for a cultural and political frame (Mustafa, 1995: 157).

Furthermore, Naipaul says that a ‘convert’ rejects his own and his world view alters. Rejecting one’s own means rejection of the self or identity, and it happens only when one suffers from some kind of identity crisis. As mentioned earlier, a person’s religious identity is not his/her ‘all-encompassing and exclusive identity.’ A Malay or Javanese, Pathan or Baluchi, Punjabi or Bengali, his identity as Malay, Javanese, Bengali or Punjabi etc. remains the same whatever religion he/she practices, converts or reverts to. The authenticity of such an assumption like Naipaul’s about the ‘converted’ non-Arab Muslims needs to be interrogated. One can say that how many ‘converts’ Naipaul actually met out of over a billion Muslim converts? It is known to the readers of Naipaul, that, he is a ‘manager’ of stories, he takes interviews of meticulously chosen people who happen to be incompetent or mere playthings in his hands, and doubtful/incompetent Muslims like Behzad in Iran or Masood in Pakistan and similar such stocks elsewhere. The fact is that, Naipaul has a generalized view of Islam and the converted people. He has tried to project Islam and its people through the examples of a few chosen people. For instance, He depicts their cruelty in the form of punishment in Iran through Ayatollah Khomeini’s hanging judge, Ayatollah Khalkhali and has tried to appropriate it as a *Koranic* (Naipaul’s use of the term for *The Holy Qura’n*) law of punishment. Naipaul, thus, out of his sheer ignorance of Islam and Islamic law of justice, has associated those acts of cruelty by individual persons not only in Iran but also in Pakistan

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where she teaches courses in African literature, African American literature, postcolonial literature, women's studies, and cultural studies. She was born in Tanzania and received her education in Britain, Tanzania, Kenya, Pakistan and the United States.

and elsewhere as Islamic law and justice. He is utterly unaware of the beauty of Islamic law and justice as prescribed in *The Holy Qura'n* which not only proclaims compassion and forgiveness as the qualities of the Almighty Allah but also commands the believers of Islam to ensure and establish compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, peace and justice in their day to day lives.

Naipaul's assessment of Islam and its peoples, especially the non-Arabs, is based on Orientalist and Eurocentric perceptions. Said has pointed out that, Orientalism is "premised upon exteriority," and hence, the Orientalist "makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West" (Said, 2001: 20-21). The Orientalist is an outsider and what he/she writes, are 'representations' and not 'natural depictions.' Naipaul's depictions of Islam and the converted peoples, are, thus, can be seen as a kind of Orientalist representation which not only demonizes Islam and its peoples (the converted peoples in particular), but also produces stereotyped inferior 'other' who are not as 'human' and 'civilized' as the West perceives itself. Such cultural stereotyping of the Muslims and Oriental Islam is not new with Naipaul. Right from Ernest Renan[12] to Bernard Lewis[13], Islam is seen as a "cultural synthesis" and could be studied like other disciplines which reduces Islam to mere "tent and tribe" (qtd. in Said, 2001: 105).

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[12] Ernest Renan was a French philosopher, religious scholar and writer. He is well known for his anti-semitic views for which he has been widely criticized as "racist." His best known works are: *Life of Jesus* (1863), *Origins of Christianity* (1866-81), *Philosophical Dialogues* (1871), *Antichrist* (1876) and *Ecclesiastes* (1882).

[13] Bernard Lewis is a British-American historian, political commentator and outstanding scholar on Oriental studies. He is a specialist in the history of Islam. He is the Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. Among his best known works are: *The Arabs in History* (1950), *Islam and the West* (1993) and *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (2003).

Today's postcolonial or postmodern world is witnessing a renewed negative stereotyping of Islam and the Muslims with the grace of electronic and other media resources. The contemporary Orientalist attitudes, argues Said, flood the press and the popular mind. The image of the Arab, for example, is constructed as "camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization. Always there lurks the assumption that although the Western consumer belongs to a numeral minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources. Why? Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being" (Said, 2001: 108). A white middle-class Westerner believes that it is his human prerogative not only to manage the non-white world but also to own it. Such dehumanized thought, argues Said, is an instance of Europocentrism[14].

Naipaul is driven by such Western/Orientalist attitudes. He is jealous of Middle East oil and the economic boom that took place in the Arab world, Iran and other South East Asian countries, particularly, Indonesia and Malaysia. Even in India, he finds the Taj Mahal (a Mughal architechtural beauty), as a kind of oddity which, if transplanted "slab by slab to the United States and re-erected, it might be wholly admirable" (AAD, 2002: 220). He is raged because it is "only a despot's monument to a woman, not of India, who bore child every year for fifteen years" (AAD, 2002: 220). The image of the Muslim rulers is that of a 'despot' in the eyes of the West or in Orientalist construction. Naipaul, as a man of Western sensibility and mind, sees the Taj as a despot's monument only, a monument dedicated to a woman who bore child every year for fifteen years. Like a true Orientalist, he constructs the image of Muslim women as those who "bred and breeding like battery hens . . ." (AAD,

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[14] The term Europocentrism or Eurocentrism is the practice of viewing the world from a European perspective. It believes in the superiority of European culture to other non-European ones. The term came into currency during the time of decolonization in the late 20th century.

2002: 135). This is, perhaps, one of the most dehumanizing representations of the identity of the Muslim women and thus, is an example of Orientalist or Western negative stereotyping. He has had a generalized assessment of Muslim women (quite astonishingly of a woman of nearly four hundred years ago). He is productive even today and has come up with his latest book *The Masque of Africa: Glimpses of African Belief* (2010). What he would say then, about those women in the West who are giving birth to twenty children in the 21st century? In British Columbia, the Romanian immigrant Livia Ionce[15] has given birth to her 18th baby in July, 2008. Likewise, Michelle Duggar[16] of Arkansas, USA, has given birth to her 19th child on December 10, 2009. There are many other such instances of record childbirths in all the ages. It is surprising that Naipaul pours out his venom and 'rage' against Islam and Muslims only. The Muslims are, thus, victims of negative stereotyping and easy generalizations.

Fouad Ajami[17] criticizes Naipaul for his 'sweeping generalizations' of the Muslims and Islamic societies. He points out that as a 'gifted novelist,' Naipaul tells the stories of the people who open up and reveal themselves like the young leftist Behzad in Iran who initially claimed the Iranian revolution as his own until his discovery that one kind of tyranny can be replaced by another; or the 32-year old Shafi who represents Malaysia with its Muslim youth movement; or Ahmed, the devout Muslim from Sind in Pakistan who doesn't find any flaw in the faith; or Imaduddin, the lecturer in electrical engineering with his "mental training" (AB, 2003: 421) in the mosque at Bandung Institute of Technology in Indonesia for Islamic revivalism and purification. However, all the people whom Naipaul meets or the places he visits, often remain undisclosed or hidden to him as a stranger. What Naipaul writes of the

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[15] *www.cbc.ca/canada.british-columbia/story/2008/07/25/bc-abbotsford-18thbaby.html*

[16] *www.duggarfamily.com/html*

[17] Fouad Ajami is a Middle East expert and Professor at Johns Hopkins University, USA. He is also the Director of the Middle East Studies Program and has published many scholarly books and articles.

holy city of Qom that "Qom's life remained hidden" (AB, 2003: 48), Ajami argues that it is probably fair to say that much of the territory he covered remained hidden to him. The places he went to, confused and eluded him, denied him entry. He was in a hurry; he wanted to see 'Islam in action.' But the people he wanted to comprehend, says Ajami, were ambiguous and guarded, and under no obligation to reveal themselves to a traveller. Commenting on Naipaul's views on Muslim 'rage' and 'fundamentalism,' Ajami writes, "he chides Moslems for being "made" by the Western world they reject. Instead of trying to understand these people, Naipaul is ready to judge them. In his desire to discover their hidden vulnerabilities and point out their contradictions, their need for outside goods and outside approval, he tends to miss the drama and the real meaning of their situation. He forgets that it is part of the painful process of history that people are always made by the world they reject and that the rage at it they express is in large measure, rage at themselves"[18]

Now, when Naipaul says that a convert's history is lost since he "rejects his own" and becomes a "part of the Arab story" (BB, 2005: 1), he is trying to question over the identity of the 'converts' by adding further that they develop 'fantasies' about who and what they are. The argument is that, what is past is history and history itself is ever changing. 'Changing' is a natural process. Naipaul himself was initially doubtful about the 'idea of change,' but later as the writer in him matures, he overcomes that illusion and starts believing in the idea of change. He tells in *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), that his "idea of an unchanging life was wrong. Change was constant. People died; people grew old; people changed houses . . . (TEA, 2002: 32). As a man of Indian indenture background in a British plantation colony in the New World, he finds himself suffocated within the small community of Indian immigrants. A scholarship for Oxford, however, comes to his rescue and he 'escapes' to his

[18] Fouad Ajami, "In Search of Islam," October 25, 1981. <*http://www.nytimes.com/books/naipaul/htm*>

most cherished land of the ‘snow and mountains,’ England. His obsession to migrate/escape from the ‘periphery’ to the ‘centre’ is disclosed in *The Middle Passage* (1962) in this way:

> I had never wanted to stay in Trinidad. When I was in the fourth form I wrote a vow on the endpaper of my Kennedy’s *Revised Latin Primer* to leave within five years. I left after six. (TMP, 2001: 34)

In the following paragraph, he tells us that his fear of Trinidad has never been examined by himself, nor he wished to examine it except that in his novels where he only has expressed this fear. Now, in this Caribbean passage, he is able to attempt to examine it. Furthermore, he justifies his ‘escape’ from this “unimportant, uncreative, cynical” (TMP, 2001: 34) land which has only the ‘stories of failure’ and not of ‘success.’ He repeats the same feelings after a few pages, “The threat of failure, the need to escape: this was the prompting of the society I knew” (TMP, 2001: 37). Or, elsewhere, in his essay, “*Reading and Writing*,” Naipaul talks about his desire to ‘get away’ to a ‘bigger world’ and give himself “time to live up to [his] fantasy and become a writer” (LO, 2004: 12). Thus, the fear of insecurity in a multi-racial and multi-cultural Trinidad and the insulated condition of the Indian peasant community with its “horror of the unclean” (AAD, 2002: 27) and the chaotic extended family system make Naipaul himself a man of ‘neurosis’ and ‘nihilism.’ The fantasy within himself for a bigger and metropolitan world makes him to denounce his country of birth, Trinidad which is a “dot on the map of the world” (AB, 2003: 58) and the community of Indian immigrants, however small, who mostly lived ‘ritualized’ lives and were not capable of self assessment. They were pretending or perhaps only feeling, that they had “brought a kind of India” with them, which they could “unroll like a carpet on the flat land” (*Two Worlds: Nobel Lecture*, December, 2001). Thus, Naipaul himself erases his sad past and allegedly puts the enigmatic stigma on the ‘converted’ people, saying that, by erasing their past they have become a “part of the Arab story” (BB, 2005: 1). By rejecting

their own, in Naipaul's words, they develop fantasies about their identity and existence. In fact, Naipaul's attempt to define and also to locate the identity of the 'converted' Muslims is in a way an attempt to define his own identity and position in the world. By erasing his peasant indentured past and by relocating himself in the centre of a once colonial power, he rather becomes a part of the colonizer's story. He comes to this part of the world with a writing vocation, the idea transmitted to him, in his phrase, by the 'universal civilization' of the West (to be discussed in detail in chapter IV). Hence, he has to prove himself, his worth as Said puts it, a 'witness to Western prosecution.' Thus, through the converted people, he tries to express his own dilemma.

III

It is true that most Naipaul books are about one man and his position in the world. As he is often referred to as a 'Third World chronicler,' his chronicles are profoundly personal, though at times, seem to be political and historical. His travels are the exploration of the self and of a missing past. As mentioned earlier, however, his subjective vision often distorts reality and his approach to the world. The anxiety over a missing past due to migration or self-exile is the foremost Naipaulian theme. It is the anxiety of a man who is doubly exiled, however, voluntarily, and deprived of any past history due to his ancestral migration. He writes in his essay, "*Reading and Writing*," that, unlike the metropolitan writer, he had no knowledge of his past. He further adds that, "the past of our community ended, for most of us with our grandfathers; beyond that we could not see" (LO, 2004: 20). It is evident here, how migration is responsible for the loss of history and past and consequently, for the crisis of identity too. In another essay, "*Prologue to an Autobiography*," Naipaul recalls that historical 'darkness' as an undated time beyond people's memories:

> It was a time beyond recall, mythical. About our family, the migration of our ancestors from India, I knew only what I knew or what I was told. Beyond . . . people's memories was undated time, historical darkness. Out of that darkness . . . we had all come. (LO, 2004: 89)

He points out that the India where Gandhi, Nehru and others operated, was historical and real, whereas, the India from which they had come was 'impossibly remote,' almost as 'imaginary' as the land of the *Ramayana*, the Hindu epic. Naipaul lived with that darkness and lack of knowledge. The 'darkness' of his own consciousness and the physical darkness of India, referred to as filth, dirt, dust, poverty and ruin are to be encountered in 1962, during his year-long travel throughout India which is recorded in his first Indian travel book, *An Area of Darkness*. His ancestral migration from that poverty-stricken 'historical darkness' to the New World plantation colony in Trinidad as indentured labourers, took place in the late 19th century. In his Nobel Lecture in December, 2001, he mentions about his ancestral migration from the Gangetic plain: "the bulk of migration from India occurred after 1880. The deal was like this. People indentured themselves for five years to serve on the estates. At the end of this time they were given a small piece of land, perhaps five acres, or a passage back to India" (LO, 2004: 183).

Naipaul's grandfather's indentured transplantation to the New World (after the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire in 1833) happened at a time when there was an urgent need for cheap labourers in the British plantation colonies throughout the world. Thus, shiploads of Indian labourers mostly from Gangetic plains of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were transported to many parts of the world including the Caribbean. Naipaul's grandfather was one of them who replaced the African slaves. In order to get rid of their poverty amidst the 'darkness' of eastern Uttar Pradesh and to change their luck in the other part of the British Empire, the Indian indentured migrants willingly abandoned their

homeland in order to explore the possibilities of success in an 'alien' land. But the journey across the seas was a calamity. It meant a traumatic break from their origins, traditions and beliefs. The life and existence of these migrants have been vividly represented by Naipaul in his masterpiece *A House for Mr. Biswas* through Hanuman House. So, in the other part of the world they built their own private hemisphere; a replica of remembered India with its rituals and beliefs. They had to struggle hard to maintain their cultural, religious and linguistic identity. Thus, being displaced, they suffered from a sense of alienation and identity crisis.

In his essay, "*East Indian*," Naipaul states that, migration from India took place at a time when travel was not easy and to the Indian migrants, West Indies must have seemed like "end of the world" (LO, 2004: 43). So, they took everything with them: beds, brass vessels, musical instruments, images and idols, holy books, sandalwood sticks, astrological almanacs etc. It was, as Naipaul believes, a kind of less uprooting than it appears: they were taking a miniature India with them and with their blinkered view of the world they were able to re-create eastern Uttar Pradesh or Bihar where they went. Naipaul's grandfather's family was not like the average Indian migrant families in Trinidad. They were upper caste Hindu Brahmins, who, by the very act of migration and crossing the so-called 'black water' or *Kaala Paani*, had defiled themselves and was taken to have lost their caste. In order to maintain their 'purity' as ritualistic Hindu Brahmins, they had to fight an unending battle against the creolizing society in the New World. It was quite a vulnerable situation for them that they could neither stay peacefully nor return due to the sense of defilement. To return to India was economically impossible and it is interesting and even ironical that in Trinidad they imposed a similar kind of restriction on those who wished to return. Naipaul writes further in this regard: "To leave India's sacred soil, to cross the "black water," was considered an act of self-defilement. So completely did these migrants re-create India in Trinidad that they imposed a similar restriction on those who wished to leave Trinidad" (LO,

2004: 43).Thus, for the migrants, there was no other choice but to remain in the 'void.' Moreover, when the indenture system was abolished in 1917, many people, especially the later arrivals became destitute, without land or repatriation. In fact, many immigrants themselves were unwilling to return to India due to fear of insecurity, ritual purification and the loss of 'familiar temporariness.' Naipaul writes in his essay, "*Prologue to an Autobiography*," about an incident of his father, who, after his 'cruel' and 'miserly' father's death, was in panic when the family was 'passed' for repatriation on an immigrant ship bound for India, he decided not to go back. "He hid in one of the latrines overhanging the sea, and he stayed there until his mother changed her mind about the trip back to India" (LO, 2004: 91). Such a past due to migration, as Naipaul himself believes — was like a dream, like *their* idea of distant and fading India. Naipaul very aptly describes the plight of those migrants in a touching passage in *A House for Mr. Biswas*:

> They could not speak English and were not interested in the land where they lived; it was a place where they had come for a short time and stayed longer than they expected. They continually talked of going back to India, but when the opportunity came, many refused, afraid of the unknown, afraid to leave the familiar temporariness. (201)

In *The Middle Passage*, in the chapter on Trinidad, Naipaul talks about the Indian community in Trinidad who live themselves as a community especially in villages. But, again, the world of their community is a world of its own which is full of jealousies and feuds. They believe Trinidad to be too unimportant and hence their interest has always been to the outside world. Everyone as an individual fights for his place in the community and yet there is no community in the true sense. They are of various races, religions and sects who somehow live in the same small island and therefore, have no particular identity. "It was only our Britishness, our belonging to the British Empire" says Naipaul, "which gave us any

identity" (TMP, 2001: 36).They are said to be without responsibility except for their 'narrow' loyalty to family or village. They are unlike the West Indian blacks who want to 'assert' their position often resulting in fierce racial conflicts. Naipaul points out that the Negro-Indian racial conflict is fiercer than the conflict between Negro and white. The fact is that, as Naipaul believes, Trinidad 'teeters' on the brink of 'racial war' and there is a great rivalry between Indians and Negroes as to who despises the other more. He observes that the "Negro has a deep contempt . . . for all that is not white; his values are the values of white imperialism at its most bigoted" (TMP, 2001: 77). On the contrary, the Indian despises the Negro for not being an Indian. Surprisingly, Naipaul's views about the Negro and the Indian are even harsher and perhaps despicable for which he is often condemned as a racist. "Indians and Negroes" he says, are "like monkeys pleading for evolution each claiming to be whiter than the other" and they "appeal to the acknowledged white audience to see how much they despise one another" (TMP, 2001: 78). Naipaul's approach here is like an Orientalist who constructs the inferior 'other' (the non-Europeans), and represents them as negative stereotypes.

Again, in Martinique, on his way back to the hotel at the end of his tour, when a black youth shouts at Naipaul who was with his 'purple heart' walking stick for which the youth pours out his anger and contempt (and it is perhaps due to his mimicry of an Englishman). It is only then he realizes that his identity as a mimicking Englishman is in threat in a quasi-alien land. He at once pours out his contempt for the land and the people saying that he is tired of the "French colonial monkey-game" (TMP, 2001: 218).

A similar sub-human categorization on the part of Naipaul can be found in his Indian travelogue, *An Area of Darkness*. He says in the chapter called 'Degree' that "the physique of the people of Andhra" suggests the "possibility of an evolution downwards" (AAD, 2002: 42). Now, the downward evolution of human beings can only take them to the status of

'monkeys' as per the Darwinian theory of evolution in reverse. Naipaul's meticulous categorization of his 'subjects' as inferior 'other' is not unknown to the critics and scholars on him. He may be a man of Indian diaspora, but one should not forget that he travels not for 'sights' only which he himself says in the foreword to *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977); he is rather commissioned by his publisher in the West for reporting back to the Western audience about the so-called Third World or in Conradian term 'half-made' societies. In an interview with Derek Walcott in 1965, which was initially published in the Trinidad *Sunday Guardian* on March 7, Naipaul admits how difficult it is to write a travel book or a book of non-fiction. He was referring to the book written on India saying that:

> The thing about traveling is that it is always slightly repetitive; the events of one day seem to occur on the next and so on. After a few months in India, it seemed that I had nothing to write about. In fact, while I was there, I abandoned the idea of writing a book. But I had already taken some money from my publishers and if I didn't present them with a book of sorts I would have had to refund the money." (Jussawalla, 1997: 5)

Some critics often argue that it is the problem of an exile like Naipaul to attach himself with the land from which he or his ancestors migrated at a critical time, and to accommodate himself with the poverty, filth and defecation of India. They, however, fail to understand that, Naipaul is equally indifferent and contemptuous to his ancestral land. He is quite aware of his 'acquired' British identity and is adamant to remain detached to whatever he encounters however unparallel to his lulled imagined India, the India of *Ramlila* and faded memories of childhood in Trinidad. Naipaul's fear and contempt for India, the 'area of darkness' make him detached from the land and people, and his identity remains at odds. He can be placed in the category of a typical 'convert' like Nirad C. Choudhuri, who has to behave in a more aggressive manner to prove his loyalty to the converted faith. Naipaul may

not have converted religiously, though he often testifies his lack of any religious faith, yet, his consciousness as a Hindu Brahmin whose ancestors had migrated from India in the late nineteenth century to the New World, cannot be ignored. Again, contrastingly, he nurtures the Western sensibility and attempts to uphold the culture and civilization of the West. He views the orient like an Orientalist, like an outsider: “Men had been diminished and deformed; they begged and whined. Hysteria had been my reaction, and a brutality dictated by a new awareness of myself as a whole human being and a determination, touched with fear, to remain what I was” (AAD, 2002: 6). He is truly a British citizen, a mimicking Englishman and a metropolitan with a colonial and indentured background, a background which has been wiped away as a faded memory of past.

Moreover, Naipaul’s assessment of the Indian immigrant community in Trinidad who are contained within their miniature India, who are vulnerable outside, but in his observation, are more ‘philistine’ than the whites. India as a country existed in their imagination and knowledge, at a ‘distant pole.’ He describes the Trinidadian Indians in *The Middle Passage* as:

> A peasant-minded, money-minded community, spiritually static because cut off from its roots, its religion reduced to rites without philosophy, set in a materialist colonial society: a combination of historical accidents and national temperament has turned the Trinidadian Indian into the complete colonial, even more philistine than the white. (2001: 89)

The Trinidadian Indians however, have their own community or live as a community, in spite of racial conflicts and the pressure of a creolizing society. But, in Martinique, as Naipaul rightly points out that, such people are ‘helpless’ due to the ‘drive’ of other castes and how any “small, alien, impoverished group would remain submerged . . . The white-mulatto-black world presented a common front of unaccommodating Frenchness; the Indian

remained an outsider" (TMP, 2001: 214). Naipaul calls them as 'lost Indians' in the chapter on Martinique in *The Middle Passage*. They are reduced to nonentity because, sadly enough, the South Indian Tamil is hardly aware of his identity as an Indian and a Tamil; he hardly knows Tamil language any more; he could only sing 'Tamul' songs in a whole night. The pathetic plight of these migrants is that, their identity has already been lost due to the natural process of assimilation or hybridization and due to the drive of dominant groups in the society. Naipaul expresses his worry about the Martinique Indians for losing their past and identity in a touching passage in a much later book, *A Turn in the South* (1989). He says:

> In 1961, when I was travelling in the Caribbean for my first travel book, I remember my shock, my feeling of taint and spiritual annihilation, when I saw some of the Indians of Martinique, that I had no means of sharing the worldview of these people whose history at some stage had been like mine, but who now, racially and in other ways, had become something other. (2003: 33)

This racially/ethnically or culturally becoming 'something other' due to the 'drive,' or often the drive of suppression and subjugation by other dominant castes, are the factors responsible to their crisis or loss of identity. The crisis/loss of identity due to inter-racial, inter-cultural, inter-linguistic and inter-religious animosity is a burning issue in today's post/neo-colonial and polarized world.

Thus, the Martinique Indians have either lost their identity or are suffering from a deep crisis of identity due to alienation and estrangement. They are unaware of what they are. Similarly, in the chapter entitled "Old Clothes" in *Beyond Belief*, a second generation Chinese migrant in Malaysia finds himself in an utterly lacking and confused mental state until his conversion to Christianity at the age of fifteen. Philip was Chinese and belonged to his father's second family and wished to put things right for his ill-treated mother. His

mother was a worshipper of Chinese idols until her conversion to Japanese Buddhism. The worshipping of the kitchen gods and offerings for them was a routine for her everyday; but one day, people like her discarded these idols and got rid of them like old clothes. As a child, these had no meaning for Philip. Naipaul too as a child did not take pleasure in religious ceremonies though he came from a Hindu Brahmin family that abounded in pundits: “I took no pleasure in religious ceremonies . . . the images didn’t interest me; I never sought to learn their significance” (AAD, 2002: 27). Tossed between two cultures, the Malay and the Chinese and an unhappy family situation, Philip’s Christianity gives him a kind of certainty, belongingness and identity. It had all been utter confusion for him before: “who am I? Chinese, but not Chinese. In a Chinese cultural programme I would be lost. English, but not English. I’ve never been to England” (BB, 2005: 395). Philip’s condition is of existential alienation. So, his dilemma as a second generation migrant is a universal problem for all migrant people. Naipaul has meticulously pinpointed the problem of identity that hounds the second or third generation migrants. It becomes clear in Philip’s words: “Who am I, beyond my shelter, my diploma, my degree? . . . Am I only my father’s son?” (BB, 2005: 396). Naipaul points out that these questions were more real to the second generation; the first generation was too busy in settling things in a new environment. For, Naipaul as a third generation migrant, finds himself in the ‘void’ of his island where his peasant grandparents had brought with them a miniature India and spread it like a carpet. A hard won scholarship however makes it possible for him to escape and establish himself as a writer with visions and attitudes often controversial. His escape from colonial Trinidad however, might be politically correct, for, he wished to make himself a global citizen and a writer.

It is known that an identity crisis is a mental/social state or feeling when a person is not sure about whom and what he/she is. Due to ethno-cultural assimilation resulting into their hybrid incongruity and the drive of the dominant castes, their (the Martinique Indians

and similar other migrants and marginalized people) distinctive character/identity is lost or comes under severe threat. In *An Area of Darkness*, immediately after his arrival in India, Naipaul shares a somewhat similar threat or crisis of identity. He says that, distinctiveness or difference is each man's attribute, and in Bombay, he has lost that distinctiveness and becomes "one of the crowd" (AAD, 2002: 39). There was nothing in his appearance or dress to distinguish him from the crowd. So, difference or distinctiveness is every man's attribute which marks his/her identity. In Trinidad or England or Egypt, to be an Indian, as Naipaul tells us, is to be distinctive; to be anything is to be distinctive. But in Bombay, he misses that distinctiveness and in hotels or restaurants, he misses the special quality of response too. Even though his root is in India and his birth in an Indian indentured immigrant family in Trinidad, he is visiting India as a British citizen and it is unsure to the readers and even to Naipaul himself that "through whose eyes" he "was seeing the East" (AAD, 2002: 6). Naturally, the question arises in the readers' mind that he might be seeing the East through a European or Orientalist eye/I. So, in Bombay, the man who is made by colonial Trinidad and metropolitan England, becomes 'faceless' with a fear of sinking into the Indian crowd without a trace. In order to attribute his identity and distinctiveness, recognition of difference becomes necessary.

Recognition of difference becomes necessary only when one has a sense of detachment from his surroundings. Ever since his arrival in India, Naipaul is haunted by the ghost of fear of insecurity and filth of India. In "The Traveller's Prelude" in *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul writes that, for him the East begins even in Greece where he has had the feeling of Europe 'falling away' and in Egypt the real East begins with its chaos of uneconomical movement, shouting and quarrelling of the men in grubby jibbahs and the feeling of 'insecurity.' Since then, feature by feature "the East, known only from books, continued to reveal itself" (AAD, 2002: 3). It is to be noted here that Naipaul had already

constructed the image of the East in his mind. Hence, he comments that "the dirt, the disease, the undernourishment, the cries of *bakshish*, the hawkers, the touts, the glimpses of minarets" (AAD, 2002: 4), and the ruins are the symptoms of the East that one expects to encounter. It is natural for an outsider/traveller like Naipaul who has a Western/British sensibility and mind to be hysterical after witnessing the 'diminished' and 'deformed' men who 'begged' and 'whined.' Sympathy does not help, hysteria becomes his reaction with the brutal awareness of himself as a metropolitan intellectual and a 'whole' human being (AAD, 2002: 6) Later, while in Kashmir, (though most of the time that Naipaul spends in India is spent in the Kashmir valley), Naipaul feels the presence of 'English India' with its *shikaras* and houseboats on the Dal lake with pictures, furniture and relics of 'another age.' He is disturbed with this English presence in the city of hookahs and samovars in this mountain-locked valley. Naipaul is equally disturbed to see the English clubs, the billiard rooms with framed cartoons of the 1930s and the libraries that had gone 'derelict' where the taste of a generation had become 'frozen.' He says that the Indians could walk among the relics of the British Raj with ease; the romance had always been partly theirs (AAD, 2002: 102). He is neither Indian like those labelled as 'Afridis' or 'Baluchis' in the derelict club, nor English. He suffers from a deep identity crisis: "I was not English or Indian; I was denied the victories of both" (AAD, 2002: 102).

And again, much later in the book and also at the end of his year-long stay in India, while visiting his grandfather's village which he titles in his book as "The Village of the Dubes," that his lack of concern for the people of his ancestral land is highlighted when he refuses to touch any food which had lovingly been offered to him. The poor Brahmins had gone to ecstasy and 'frenzy' of activity that Naipaul feels 'overwhelmed' and seeks to extricate himself at once. He even refuses to give a poor boy of his relation, a lift to the town in his jeep and his words are really harsh: "let the idler walk" (AAD, 2002: 286). Thus, his

visit to his grandfather's village ends up in futility and his sense of detachment ignited his subsequent withdrawal. His encounter with Ramachandra, the present head of his grandfather's branch, the embodiment of his ancestral Brahminhood and identity, with a dhoti, shaven head and a *chutki* (hair knot), who is mistaken for a beggar and a monk outside the door of his hotel, is in a way, an encounter with his own self. His acquired British and metropolitan identity collides with the other inescapable and yet disgusting identity as a descendant of an indentured Indian Brahmin. This is the reason why India could not put any charm on him. It remained the land of his childhood imagination, an area of darkness where he could not 'penetrate' (AAD, 2002: 274). He had learnt his separateness from India and was content to be a 'colonial' without a past, and without ancestors. So, it is clear that Naipaul is very much conscious of his distinct identity. Landeg White considers that such detachment and denial of concern on the part of Naipaul "matches his own existence in London" (White, 1975: 7). Naipaul's whole career is centered on the uncertainties of his own position: the cultural ambiguities of his background, the effects of displacement and the inability to place himself in the societies to which he cannot belong, make him a man without a home and his "homelessness" becomes for him a "universal condition" (White, 1975: 2-3). Therefore, the dust, the heat, the defecation, and the poverty of India have worked as repellents and added flavour in Naipaul's sense of denial/detachment to his ancestral land.

In the opening chapter called "The Resting-Place for the Imagination" in *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul writes:

> . . . India had in a special way been the background of my childhood. It was the country from which my grandfather came, a country never physically described and therefore never real, a country out in the void beyond the dot of Trinidad; and from it our journey had been final. (2002: 21)

So, the journey from 'the area of darkness' to the New World had been final for his ancestors, but it can be argued that, for Naipaul, there is no final journey; hence there can be no resting place for imagination. He is a restless traveller who is in a constant move to define himself and his position in the world. The country which is 'suspended' in time remains an isolated and impenetrable place which had produced his ancestors who had been born in India and had migrated to Trinidad as indentured labourers. However, critical/cynical of India's dust, dirt, heat, poverty and defecation, in his trip to India, he becomes able to see "how complete a transference had been made from eastern Uttar Pradesh to Trinidad" (AAD, 2002: 24). Therefore, the hysteria, the detachment and the 'darkness' not only of the area which he explores, but also, the exploration of the 'darkness' in his own consciousness, are the core of this travel book. In his Nobel lecture, Naipaul refers to this darkness: "In Trinidad, bright boy though I was, I was surrounded by areas of darkness . . . when I became a writer those areas of darkness around me as a child became my subjects. ("*Two Worlds: Nobel Lecture*," December 7, 2001).

In India, Naipaul vacillates between two worlds: the world of his childhood imagination of a 'mythical' land of his ancestors, the India in the New World to which his ancestors "carried no mark of indenture, no mark even of having been labourers," (AAD, 2002; 22) and the area of darkness which he presently encounters. He finds himself in a society to which he cannot belong; his land of imagination is replaced by a land of darkness and despair which is difficult for him to accept. The only alternative available to him is withdrawal and flight. Like all other works, Naipaul's main concern in this book is the effect of migration/displacement and how after generations of gaps, one finds oneself utterly alien and homeless in a land from which one or one's ancestors have migrated or got displaced. Chapter III discusses Naipaul's idea of two worlds in detail.

In the foreword to *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul discloses the purpose of his visit as an 'inquiry' not merely about India and the Emergency; however, the enquiry goes beyond the political. It has been an inquiry about 'Indian attitude' and the civilization itself and most importantly, it has been an inquiry about his own self as a stranger whose ancestors had migrated from the Gangetic plain a hundred years ago. His ancestors and others had established the Indian community in Trinidad, in the New World in which he grew up. A hundred years had been enough to separate him from his roots and hence so much time has been taken to come to terms with the strangeness of India and Indian 'attitudes.' He writes: "India is for me a difficult country. It isn't my home and cannot be my home; yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it; I cannot travel only for the sights. I am at once too close and too far" (AAD, 2002: x). He is fully aware of his position as a stranger in India but at the same time it becomes difficult for him to accommodate or reconcile with the memories of a different India which had been cherished and lived in his childhood in Trinidad. For him those memories are like "trapdoors into a bottomless past" (AAD, 2002: xii).

In *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), in the chapter captioned as "Bombay Theatre," while talking about the mafiadom of Bombay and the growth of regional and communal feelings generated by various groups and sects, one among them is the Shiv Sena which propagate the idea 'Maharastra for the Maharastrians' and campaigned against immigration into Bombay from other states, the poor migrants from other parts of the country feel threatened and alienated. Naipaul himself experiences similar feelings of alienation when he visits India for the first time in 1962. It had been a special journey for him as he had gone as a descendant of the 19th century indentured Indian emigrants. Such emigrants, as Naipaul writes, had been recruited from the 1860s mainly from the eastern Gangetic plain and sent out from depots in Calcutta to work in the plantations in various parts of the British Empire

and even elsewhere as indentured labourers on a five-year term. Naipaul's ancestors as mentioned earlier, had gone to Trinidad in the 1880s.

These overseas Indian groups as Naipaul puts it were mixed with people of different castes and religions. These groups were like miniature Indias but at the same time, in the New World, they were disadvantaged and without political tradition and representation. They were isolated by language and culture not only from the people they found themselves among, but also from India, the country they left behind. Thus, circumstances and separation from the ancestral country had developed a sense of belonging to an Indian community which they would never have known in India. Naipaul believes that it was this idea of an Indian community which the young M. K. Gandhi had discovered at a time hardly with a political, historical or literary idea when he went to South Africa to work for the Indian immigrants there.

Naipaul was born 15 years before the Independence of India and yet two generations had separated him from his ancestral country. He grew up with two ideas of India: the first was about the kind of country from which his ancestors had come. Since they were agricultural people, most of them in Trinidad were still working on the colonial sugar estates and moreover, for most of them, life was terribly poor. The extent of their poverty and hard life is highlighted by Naipaul in his masterpiece, *A House for Mr. Biswas*. So, many of them (the Indian immigrants) lived in thatched, mud-walled huts. The fact that Naipaul discloses about them is that, migration to the New World has shaken them out of the ways of peasant India and had made them ambitious. But, unfortunately, in colonial and agricultural Trinidad, there were few opportunities to rise: with poverty around them and the sense of the world as a kind of prison due to the insulated condition of the community of the Indians, and the threat outside. Thus, the India from which his ancestors had migrated to better themselves, the India with its poverty and darkness, dust and defecation, becomes in his imagination, a "fearful

place" (IMMN, 1998: 7). This India, as Naipaul tells us, was private and personal, beyond the India which one reads in newspapers and books. The anxiety about where they had come from was like a neurosis which brutally haunts and alienates him during his first visit.

Then, there was a second India for these Indian migrants. This India was the India of the independence movement, the India of the great names, great civilization and the great classical past. In all the difficulties of their circumstances in the New World, they felt supported by this India. It was, as Naipaul tells us, an aspect of their identity, the community identity they had developed, which had become more like a racial identity in multi-racial Trinidad. This was the identity Naipaul took to India on his first visit in 1962; yet, painfully, he discovered then that, for him, that kind of community identity had no meaning in India. In fact, the idea of an Indian community which was a kind of a continental idea of their Indian identity made sense only when the community was small: a minority and an isolated community. In the torrents of India, in the midst of hundreds of millions where the threat was of chaos and the void, for Naipaul, that continental idea was of no comfort at all — "people needed to hold on to smaller ideas of who and what they were" (IMMN, 1998: 8). A similar kind of a feeling of an identity crisis can be found in *An Area of Darkness* where Naipaul finds himself as one of the crowd with no distinct identity. He becomes 'faceless' with a fear that he "might sink without a trace" (AAD, 2002: 39) into the Indian crowd.

As it has been said earlier, that the outsiders and the marginalized people including the minority, feel threatened and alienated in a society dominated by hostile and stronger groups and under adverse conditions. For example, in Bombay, the Dalits and the Muslims feel threatened and alienated; and in order to secure their position, they have to fight in their own way to counter the atrocities and oppression against them. The Dalits have their 'Dalit Panthers' and are said to have links with the ghettoized Muslim groups who being minority and confined to particular area(s), and being threatened and alienated, have no other

alternative but to become either thugs and *goondas* (ruffians) like Anwar's brothers or passionate Muslims for survival . Naipaul feels sympathy and affection with Anwar and his father as he says:

> I felt that if I had been in their position, confined to Bombay, to that area, to that row, I too would have been a passionate Muslim. I had grown up in Trinidad as a member of the Indian community, a member of a minority, and I knew that if you felt your community was small, you could never walk away from it; the grimmer things became, the more you insisted on being what you were. (IMMN, 1998: 31)

His memory takes him back to Trinidad, a memory of 40 years ago, that people, like animals, could be made by the conditions in which they lived or were reared as chickens reared in a small cage, found it impossible to walk when they were released. Thus, people who lived in little spaces of Bombay got used to those spaces and to the communal life like the community life of the Indians in the New World, who, even after being 'passed' i.e. permitted to leave Trinidad at the end of their indenture, were unwilling to return, to leave that 'familiar temporariness' as mentioned before. Again, the life and performances of a Bombay *pujari* known as "Electric Pujari" (IMMN, 1998: 78-79) take Naipaul back to his memories of his grandmother's family in Trinidad when he was a child. There had been so many pujas, so many ritual readings from the scriptures and the epics which had given them less the idea of what they were than the idea that in Trinidad they were apart (IMMN, 1998: 79).

Similarly, the Muslims of India, after the partition in 1947, had been living in ghettoes especially in the cities, as a community. The lives and conditions of the Muslim ghettoes make Naipaul sympathetic towards them. The partition had made the younger and intellectual class to migrate to Pakistan for better opportunities like Rashid's brother of

Lucknow, the city of the Nawabs. Thus, the middle class migration and the migration of the Muslim intelligentsia to Pakistan had damaged the backbone of the Muslims in India. In the chapter "The End of the Line" in *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, Naipaul talks about this Muslim crisis stating that: Lucknow was the end of the line for Muslim India (351). But yet, not all middle class Muslims left, there were people like Rashid who stayed behind; but, stayed with the life of the ghetto where people were ill-equipped, vulnerable and deprived. That is why the sight of the decay of the great Imambara and on the other, the Residency symbolizing the British victory over 'Muslim India,' is the root cause of Rashid's rage. He is not like others who have accepted partition and left behind their own people to start a new life there after their migration to Pakistan. He, on the other hand, identifies himself with Lucknow that gives him his "sense of identity" (IMMN, 1998: 385-86). Unlike his overseas educated brother, Rashid stays back in India, in his own city of Lucknow. He is so deeply rooted in India that everything about him is Lucknow and Lucknow is him. They have been here for many generations and cannot simply quit or detach themselves from India as those who have left for Pakistan. His identity as an Indian and as a Muslim has no doubt. His idea of faith and belongingness separates him from the Muslims of Pakistan, Afghanistan or Iran: "I'm a Muslim, but in its details my faith cannot be the same faith as one in Afghanistan or Iran or Pakistan" (IMMN, 1998: 385).

He had been to Pakistan once, but had felt relieved to be back. Though he had found that the Muslims who migrated from Lucknow at the time of partition, including his brother, had no 'identity crisis' there, but he did not feel at home. It is true that religion is not a man's "distinguishing feature" (IMMN, 1998: 370); it is also not a man's all encompassing identity. But, Rashid didn't like the Pakistani money culture and business aggressiveness, their boasting about money and possessions. The sense of belonging which he had in India, he knew, he could not find anywhere else. Yet, the confrontation and dilemma that he faces

within his psyche, has shattered him to pieces: “I also know that I can never be a complete person now. I can’t ignore partition. It’s a part of me . . . the creation and existence of Pakistan has damaged a part of my psyche” (IMMN, 1998: 387). The stories of Rashid and Amir go parallel to that of Naipaul who is caught in a ‘void’ between two worlds and cultures: mainstream or dominant on the one hand and the marginal or the peripheral on the other. His writings are the dialogues/clashes between the two worlds/cultures he inhabits. The catastrophic consequence that comes out of ethno-cultural hybridization of the migrant people and the confrontation within and without will be discussed in the next chapter.

Again, those who migrated to Pakistan had to fight for survival in a Sunni majority country because most of the migrants to Pakistan from India were Shias, as Naipaul puts it. Their identity and position in Pakistan is that of a *mohajir* (refugee/foreigner). Thus, the migrant’s identity and position in the society is still a burning issue in Pakistan. A similar situation persists in former East Pakistan, present Bangladesh where a sizeable number of Urdu speaking Bihari Muslims lead a life of alienation and as a consequence, they suffer from a crisis of identity. In the chapter entitled “Displacement” in *Beyond Belief*, Naipaul writes:

> The Bengali Muslims had Bangladesh; the people of West Pakistan had Pakistan. The Bihari Muslims had nothing. They had migrated from Bihar in eastern India to Pakistani Bengal. But, by language and culture they were closer to the Muslims of the West. When Bangladesh became independent they were wanted neither by Bangladesh nor by Pakistan, and they became a lost community. (BB, 2005: 103)

He observes (by invoking Sir Iqbal), that their migration to Bengali speaking East Pakistan at the time of partition in 1947 considering it to be a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent has worked as boomerang on them. Their religious identity as Muslims has

been submerged by the linguistic and cultural identity of the majority, even though they share the same religious identity.

Our identity or identification with something cannot be static or reduced to fixed positions. In India, as we have seen, Naipaul comes with a preconceived identity as a British citizen of metropolitan England. His distinctiveness or selfhood suffers in the midst of the sea of the Indian crowd. His selfhood and identity collides with the unstable exterior of India which is different from the imagined mythical land of his childhood. "Identification," says Jonathan Rutherford, "if it is to be productive, can never be with some static and unchanging object. It is an interchange between self and structure, a transforming process" (Rutherford, 1990: 14). Identities or identifications are, thus, neither singular nor predictable. Naipaul's consciousness as one who possesses a distinct identity and his attempt for identification with the India of a preconceived notion, turns out to be futile.

Again, one's sense of home is very crucial for his/her identification or location of identity. Naipaul has no sense of home in India. For him, India is a land from which his ancestors had migrated long ago. It has become a distant land, as time and space had separated them from India. Hence, far from being a home, it becomes an imaginary land for them. Rutherford, however, gives enough importance to home saying that "home is where we speak from" (Rutherford, 1990: 24). He argues that modern life, though ascribes to us a multiplicity of subject positions and potential identities, but human predicament is threatened by lack of historicity, personal, collective or moral boundaries. In today's 'wide-open' world, due to the lack of spatial certainty and historical consciousness, people suffer from 'not belonging,' uncertainty, isolation and 'out of touch.' Man's both interior and exterior worlds collide. His struggle for identity and sense of personal coherence and intelligibility are centered on the threshold between exterior and interior or between self and other. Therefore, if one "cannot establish that sense of selfhood, only retreat and entrenchment are the viable

alternatives to a schizophrenic and disturbed existence" (Rutherford, 1990: 24). Being unable to establish a sense of identity and belongingness with India, the schizophrenic Naipaul prefers to withdraw from it. When one achieves a sense of personal integrity, then one can represent himself/herself and be recognized. Only then, one can feel at home and feel belonged. Efforts have, thus, been made to show how V. S. Naipaul undergoes a schizophrenic or claustrophobic experience when his identity gets threatened due to his detachment or lack of identification with the 'faceless' Indian crowd. His disturbed interior self collides with the unpredicted exterior which ultimately ignites his retreat from India where he is unable to establish a sense of home or belongingness.

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CHAPTER - III

AMBIVALENCE OF EXISTENCE

> . . . I don't want to end up as a *mohajir* in another country. My parents were born in one country; I in another; I don't want my kids to be born in a third.
>
> — BB, 2005: 380

I

It has been mentioned in the preceding chapter, that the Indian migrants, who went to Pakistan at the time of partition in 1947, came to be known as *mohajirs.* Most of them, according to Naipaul, were Shia migrants who were driven by the passion for a "Muslim polity" (AB, 2003: 103), the idea of a separate Muslim state formulated by Sir Mohammad Iqbal. The aim of the present study is not to justify or unjustify the demand for a separate Muslim state on the basis of religion by a section of the Muslim leaders. This study, however, aims at determining the fatal consequences of migration and displacement that fell on the migrant/displaced people of the subcontinent, and especially, the people of the periphery in Naipaulian concept.

In *Among the Believers*, Hasan Jafri, a journalist, like all other *mohajirs* in the city of Karachi in Pakistan (where things do not go right with the migrants not only from India but also from other provinces within Pakistan), is a descendent of a *mohajir*. Naipaul, as a descendent of Indian indentured migrants, finds his shadow in him (Hasan Jafri) who is afraid of ending up as a non-entity. He says, "My biggest fear now is that we might end up as

a basket case" (BB, 2005: 380). But, Hasan Jafri is unlike Naipaul in the sense that he does not want to detach himself from Pakistan, not because that he is afraid of detaching himself, but because of uncertainty of one's life and existence when detached or displaced/migrated. As quoted above, he, as a descendent of a *mohajir*, a *mohajir* himself who does not want to end up as a *mohajir* in another country. His parents were born in one country i.e. India and he in another i.e. Pakistan; and again, he does not want his children to be born in a third. Hasan Jafri's sense of fear and insecurity as a member of the marginalized migrant community in the midst of turbulence and terror can be seen as a universal tragedy of the migrant/displaced people. There are thousands like Hasan Jafri who are victims of displacement or migration. There is the college teacher Mushtaq, the half-*mohajir* Nusrat or Abdul, who suffer from insecurity, uncertainty and alienation. Abdul, as Naipaul puts it, is a man of Mohajir Movement; his father and grandfather migrated from Shimla. He speaks out the problems of the second generation migrants or *mohajirs*; the first generation was too busy to settle themselves in the new place like those Indian migrants in Trinidad and other parts of the world. The second generation found themselves in-between two worlds: one is their present hybrid/creolized identity and uncertain position and the other is their ancestral root/past that lies in India. The uncertainty and ambivalence of their existence is echoed in Abdul's words: ". . . when I leave home in the morning I am not sure whether I will return home" (BB, 2005: 366). Mushtaq, the college teacher of English literature in Karachi, finds his work and his place difficult, unsecured and vulnerable due to the turmoil and restlessness that prevailed in the form of a war-like situation: the MQM (Muttahida Quami Movement) with all its violence and clashes with the army, the disturbances created by the students such as burning and hijacking buses on the streets even near Mushtaq's college; the misbehaviour and unreceptiveness of his students, he shares with Naipaul, saying that it is a "life in vain" (BB, 2005: 373); in twenty-nine years of his professional career he has achieved nothing. It is

argued that Naipaul makes Islamic radicalism responsible for what is happening in the non-Arab Muslim world especially Pakistan, but it cannot be denied that the over-influx of the migrants from India with the partition and after, has made the situation worse there.

The partition of India made millions of people uprooted; millions died and affected millions of others. The Muslim migrants from India went mainly to Karachi, the port city and former capital of Pakistan. Naipaul observes that nearly half a century after the great migration, the descendents of these migrants feel themselves strangers among alien people. These alien people, for the *mohajirs*, were people of the local clans, mainly the Sindhis who did not like to see their land "overrun by better educated and more ambitious strangers" (BB, 2005: 325). They turned hostile towards the *mohajirs* and began putting up various political and economic barriers against these migrants. It was a sad reality, a reality of the existence of these *mohajirs* in Pakistan that they had "nowhere else to go" (BB, 2005: 325). For Naipaul, these people had agitated more than anyone else for the separate Muslim state, and, to Sindh, in Pakistan they came, as if, to their own land; but tragically, they found that, "it belonged to someone else" (BB, 2005: 364). The *mohajirs*, were thus, a "nationality without [a] territory" (BB, 2005: 364). The partition, which was once, though arguably, a "cause of joy" (BB, 2005: 325), a victory, had become like a wound for most of these *mohajirs*. It is arguable because Naipaul's assessment is faulty and somewhat biased since he has put the responsibility of the horror of partition on Muslims only. There were many other factors that were responsible for India's partition. Former minister and parliamentarian Jaswant Singh observes in a recent scholarly work *Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence* (2009), that the partition of India was one of the biggest blunders of the 20th century and the history of the civilization. Singh, however, does not hold Muslims or The All India Muslim League and its

self-styled spokesman Mohammed Ali Jinnah[19] solely responsible for the partition. He argues that, it was the British, with its 'divide and rule' policy, and the 'rigidity' of The Indian National Congress, with regard to Hindu-Muslim unity, which were equally responsible for one of the most calamitous events of the twentieth century, that has distorted the geopolitical and demographic cartography of the whole subcontinent. Singh observes that, it was Jinnah's defective notion of Muslims as a 'separate' nationality, together with the then Congress leaders' non-cooperative and essentially Hindu sentimentality and power politics that have led to India's 'vivisection.' However, "It was Congress versus the Muslim League, two parties contending for power . . . that led to partition" (Singh, 2009: 80). Naipaul's belief that, it was 'faith' alone, that has rendered the partition, has been challenged by recent historical researches. Singh argues that, the Muslim community, for Jinnah, was only an electoral body, and his call for a Muslim nation, was his political platform. The "battles he fought were entirely political — between the Muslim League and the Congress; Pakistan was his political demand over which he . . . could rule. Religion in all this was entirely incidental . . ." (Singh, 2009: 486).

Therefore, it can be said that the partition of India was not at all a cause of joy or victory for most Muslims of India, who opposed it. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad,[20] in his speech from Jama Masjid of Delhi, on 23rd October, 1947, grieved over the partition, saying that, it was a "fundamental mistake" (cited in Jaswant Singh, 2009: 575). In a review of *Beyond Belief*, which appeared in *London Review of Books* in 1998, entitled "*Manager of Stories*," Michael Gilsenan observes that, Naipaul's is an 'imperial' Islam that has doomed

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[19] Mohammad Ali Jinnah, popularly known as Quaid-e-Azam was a great lawyer and statesman of undivided India. He was the founding father and the first Governor General of Pakistan.

[20] Maulana Azad was a prominent freedom fighter and a great scholar who opposed the partition of India. He was a proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity and became the first Education Minister of independent India.

the converted peoples to ‘neurosis’ and ‘nihilism.’ He criticizes Naipaul, for his willful censoring and silent pass-over of the history of different forms of imperial and eagerly conversionist Christianity in Africa, the Americas and Asia, which are as aggressively competitive as any mullah’s dream for paradise. His (Naipaul’s) sheer ignorance of different kinds of thoughts and practices that are connected with Islam in Asia, that takes many eclectic forms, displays the intellectual emptiness of his writing. “His is an Islam which turned the radiance of the Indian sub-continent ‘into the light of a dead star’ and, because of its devotees’ fantasies and confusions, bears all responsibility for the horrors of partition. The violent and dangerous activities of Hindu nationalists go unremarked” (Gilsenan, 1998). In another review, entitled, “*Understanding the Indian Muslim*” of Rafiq Zakaria’s *Indian Muslims: Where Have They Gone Wrong?*, M. Hamid Ansari[21] writes that, what the proponents of Hindutva raise the question of ‘Muslim responsibility’ for the partition, needs many questions to be answered:

> Did all or even the majority of Muslims participate in the making of the decision? If not, how representative - and by what process - were those who took the decision? How did the decision come to be endorsed by other Indians? Was it a conscious process or an unconscious one, autonomous or externally induced? How, in any case, are present day Indian Muslims responsible - morally or legally - for what a previous generation is alleged to have done? (*Frontline*, Nov. 06-19, 2004)

Ansari considers that, the whole business of Muslim responsibility, is a classic example of what the Oxford philosopher Gilbert Ryle called systematically ‘misleading’ expressions, that misrepresent facts and falsify perceptions. He suggests that, the debate regarding the

[21] M. Hamid Ansari is currently the Vice President of India. He is a distinguished academician and former Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University.

Muslim responsibility must be closed for the good of the country. Ansari rightly says that, Zakaria's effort will indeed help the younger generation to be confident and assert their right to be implemented equally and specifically and come out of the 'partition-induced conformity syndrome' that many people suffered in the past. He says that "the Muslims of India proclaim as Maulana Azad did in October 1947, not only that do they belong to this country but also that 'any fundamental decision about its destiny will remain incomplete without our consent"' (Ansari, 2004).

Naipaul puts the blame on the faith (Islam) for the plight of the migrants in Pakistan, when he says, "the faith was identity enough, and state enough. It was the very idea with which the *mohajirs* had come to Pakistan" (BB, 2005: 365). The fact, however, is that, it was not the 'faith' only, which had driven the Muslims to Pakistan. There were some other factors such as, social and political, which were mainly responsible for the partition of India, some of whom already mentioned. Since, Naipaul has assessed the Muslims: converts as well as migrants, in a historical perspective, it is necessary, to discuss the partition and pre-partition scenario in that perspective. Prof. Salahuddin Ahmed, a Bangladeshi historian at an UGC seminar held in Calcutta in April 1972, gives a clear account of the politics involving the Pakistan movement, stating that:

> The movement which led to the creation of Pakistan was not a religious movement . . . Fear of Hindu political domination which could adversely affect the (Muslim) community's political, economic and cultural interests seemed to have been an important factor which influenced the movement . . . Few of the leaders of the movement had any deep personal attachment to traditional Islam. It was precisely for this reason that orthodox Muslims represented by such organisations as Majlis-i-Ahrar, Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind did

> not support the League, maintaining that its leadership was not quite Islamic." (qtd. in Bipan Chandra *et al*, 1994: 201-2)

There were both moderate and extremist groups among the Muslims, as well as, the Hindus, and it is argued that, while the moderates worked for the Hindu-Muslim unity, the narrow-minded, short-sighted Muslims and Hindus alike remained adamant with their own nationalisms (Bipan Chandra *et al*, 1994: 105). The nationalism, which developed in India, during the second half of the nineteenth century, spread rapidly among the Hindus and to a lesser extent, to the Muslims. But, before the advent of the British in India,

> . . . the Hindu and Muslim masses had on the whole lived together without antipathy or bitterness except certain minor religious antagonisms. Societal division was class-wise: the rich and the poor; the upper caste and the lower caste; the rulers and the ruled. But after the revolt of 1857 in which both Hindus and the Muslims fought unitedly against the British oppressors, the Muslims were targeted because they led the revolt; it is estimated that in Delhi alone 27000 Muslims were sentenced to death. (Bipan Chandra *et al*, 1994: 97)

Naipaul may well find a link between the 1857 revolt and the agitation for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan that happened eighty years later. For him, the revolt, as referred to as the "First War of Indian Independence" was a "20th-century view, 20th-century language, and a kind of mimicry, seeking to give the old India something of the socialist dynamism the Russians found in their own history. The mutiny was the last flare-up of Muslim energy in India until the agitation . . . for a separate Muslim state of Pakistan" (IMMN, 1998: 351). Lucknow, as Naipaul puts it, was "the end of the line for Muslim India" (IMMN, 1998: 351), putting a divisive line on communal grounds, like the European historians. James Mill was the first to periodize Indian history on such grounds in the early nineteenth century in his *The*

History of British India (1818)**.** Noted historian Romila Thapar argues that, Mill's utilitarian division of the Indian history into Hindu period (ancient India), Muslim period (medieval India) and British period (modern India), and such periodization is, at the root of the ideologies of current religious nationalism, and has had a far reaching influence on the politics of South Asia. Religious nationalism, thus, as Thapar argues, retains the colonial periodization of Indian history and the fundamental interpretation that, India consists of the majority Hindu community and the minority Muslim community with other smaller minority communities. The 'Hindu' period is seen as a Golden Age, while the 'Muslim' period is seen as a Dark Age. Moreover, the British government's determination to 'strengthen' the hands of Hindu and Muslim communalists, as part of their policy of "Divide and Rule" (Bipan Chandra *et al*, 1994: 176) had been largely responsible for the partition of India. It can, therefore, be said that, Naipaul has dealt with history of the subcontinent without a sense of history.

Percival Spear, a reputed European historian, gives a clear account of the Muslims as a community of a time prior to the partition and at the time of the Pakistan movement. He writes about the Indian Muslims that, the heyday of the Muslim community in India, was the Mughal empire, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when they formed the 'ruling race' of India; but, with the collapse of the Mughal empire, the Muslims, not only lost power, but also wealth and position. In addition, the English education, which the British introduced, the Hindus welcomed it, while the Muslims remained aloof, thinking it to be the "high-way to infidelity" (qtd. in Spear, 1990: 223-224). Naipaul too, has a similar view: "The British period … was a time of Hindu regeneration. The Hindus, especially in Bengal, welcomed the New Learning of Europe and the institutions the British brought. The Muslims, wounded by their loss of power, and out of religious scruples, stood aside. It was the beginning of the intellectual distance between the two communities" (BB, 2005: 265). He further points out

that, it was the sense of insecurity among the Muslims that had led the call for the creation of Pakistan. Yet, Naipaul employs an aggressive tone, when he refers to the Muslims of India as 'invaders' in the very next sentence. That, the call for the creation of Pakistan, as Naipaul puts it, went simultaneously with the idea of old glory of:

> . . . the invaders sweeping down from the north-west and looting the temples of Hindustan and imposing the faith on the infidel. The fantasy still lives; and for the Muslim converts of the subcontinent it is the start of their neurosis, because in this fantasy the convert forgets who or what he is and becomes the violator. (BB, 2005: 265)

So, the identity of the Muslims of the subcontinent, as constructed by Naipaul, is that of an 'invader,' 'violator' etc. forgetting that the mass of the Muslims of the subcontinent, are 'converts' (in his own term) and that also, voluntary conversion in most cases.

II

One of the factors responsible for Muslim mass conversion in India is the Sufi influence, during 11th - 14th centuries. The prominent figures in the Sufi movement in India, were: Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti of Ajmer, Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki of Delhi, Fariduddin Ganjeshkar of Pakpattan (now in Pakistan), Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia of Delhi, Hazrat Shah Jalal Aulia of Sylhet (now in Bangladesh) etc. The Sufi's were mainly interested with the spiritual and inner aspects of Islam in order to come closer to their Creator in paradise. They denounced worldliness and stressed on spirituality and purity of character and mind. Their simplicity, spirituality and purity in character, attracted the common mass who later converted to Islam. Unlike orthodox Islamic scholars, called the *ulema*, the Sufis interpreted Islam in a liberal way which helped to bridge the spiritual gap between common masses

having different religious beliefs. Sufism, thus, had played an instrumental role in spreading Islam in India.

Besides that, the Arab traders played a significant role in spreading Islam in India. In her notable work, *The Penguin History of Early India* (2002), Romila Thapar points out that, the arrival of the Arabs, the Turks and the Afghans to India has not only enriched the land but also has put up “further layers on the palimpsest of Indian ethnic identities” (2002: 438). Today, they (Muslims) are seen as a collective entity, and labelled as ‘the Muslims’ and the hosts as ‘the Hindus.’ She argues that, these labels are historically inaccurate; instead, it would be historically more accurate to use the labels and terms that were current in those times, and it would convey a different impression from one’s perception of them today. These two religious communities had no homogeneous culture or religion, and within each category there was a diverse sense of community, where, people were mostly identified by caste, occupation, language, region etc. than by the religious labels as used today. For Thapar, what is defined as the Hindu community in religious terms, actually consisted of a range of groups with clear internal identities, as different sects such as Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta or Bhagavata, Pashupata, Kapalika and so on (Thapar, 2002: 439), while, the Buddhists and the Jainas were yet distinct sects. The term ‘Hindu’ as Thapar considers, was initially used as a geographical identity, referring to the frontier region of the Indus or Sindhu or Hindush; only later, it took religious connotation and came to be used as all inclusive identity of both *Brahmanas* and *Shudras.* Similarly, what is called the Muslim community today was equally differentiated between the Sunnis, Shias, Sufis, Ahmadias etc. Thapar argues that, for Muslims in India, there were localized differences in belief and ritual, some of which continued after conversion, and for well-placed individuals, conversion may have been due to political ambition; but, “much of the large-scale conversion was through caste,” and sometimes, “a *jati* or part of it would convert, probably believing it to be a mechanism of

social improvement" who continued their old customs and rituals after conversion (Thapar, 2002: 439). Moreover, the Hindus used to refer the incoming people from central Asia as *Yavanas* (originally applied to the Greeks to mean those who came from the west) or, *Mlechchha*, to mean a variety of people culturally alien, instead of referring to them as 'Muslims' or 'Mohammedans.' She argues that:

> The historical continuity of the labels used for those who now settling in the subcontinent indicates that they were not perceived as altogether alien. The Arabs had been trading with the western coast of India since pre-Islamic times and the trades became more active in Islamic time . . . the Arabs, Turks and Afghans, and later the Mughals, settled in the subcontinent and married locally differentiates them from the people of later European colonial societies, who, having made their fortunes, retired to their own homelands and took their wealth with them. (Thapar, 2002: 440-41)

Naturally, the question may arise in one's mind, as to why Naipaul has not labelled the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English, as the 'invaders' and 'violators' and the flag-hoisters of imperialism and the drainers of India's wealth and resources? Many critics find that, a strong bias is at work with Naipaul when he deals with the non-Arab Muslims and the Muslim world as a whole.

The noted Muslim intellectual and social reformer, Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, with his Aligarh Anglo-Oriental College, had tried to apply balm on the wounds of the Indian Muslims, by trying to bring the community back in the mainstream. But, with the rise of the Hindu nationalist feelings (and, with the partition of Bengal), the Muslim community anticipated the threat of insecurity, and thereby, came with their demand for 'safeguards.' There were widespread communal riots and a revival of fear, insecurity and suspicion in the minds of the Muslims, as a minority community. Whereas, on the issue of the safeguards for

the Muslim community in India, most Muslim leaders were unanimous, but, on the issue of a separate homeland for the Muslims, many opposed, except the Muslim League leaders. The separate electorates for Muslims actually meant the provincial autonomy of Muslim dominated provinces. It is said that, Sir Iqbal (though he is held mostly responsible for sowing the seed of Pakistan) never wanted an independent Muslim state in the subcontinent; he, rather wanted Muslim autonomous states within a single Indian Union, in order to safeguard the rights, culture, tradition and religion of the Muslims. He propagated not only for the interests and safeguards of the Muslim minority, but also, other ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities as well. In his Presidential Address to 55th session of the All India Muslim League, held on Allahabad on 29th December, 1930, Iqbal talks about the unity of the Indian nation, and how a harmonious federation could be made within the Indian union. "The unity of an Indian nation", he says, "must be sought not in the negation, but in the mutual harmony and cooperation, of the many" and "it is on the discovery of Indian unity in this direction that the fate of India as well as of Asia really depends. India is Asia in miniature. Part of her people have cultural affinities with nations of the east, and part with nations in the middle and west of Asia. If an effective principle of cooperation is discovered in India, it will bring peace and mutual goodwill to this ancient land which has suffered so long" (Presidential Address, 1930). He painfully regrets that, the attempts made by them for internal harmony, have, so far failed because the Hindus and the Muslims suspect at each other's political intentions and aim at dominating each other. He further says:

> . . . in the higher interests of mutual cooperation, we cannot afford to part with the monopolies which circumstances have placed in our hands, and [thus we] conceal our egoism under the cloak of nationalism, outwardly stimulating a large-hearted patriotism, but inwardly as narrow-minded as a caste or tribe. Perhaps we are unwilling to recognize that each group has a right to free

> development according to its own cultural traditions . . . A community which is inspired by feelings of ill-will towards other communities is low and ignoble. I entertain the highest respect for the customs, laws, religious and social institutions of other communities". (Presidential Address, 1930)

He was of the view that, if the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development on the lines of his own culture and tradition in his own Indian home-land, and is recognized as the basis of a permanent communal settlement, he will be ready to stake his all for the freedom of India. He had great concern for a united and harmonious whole India, as he says, India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages, and professing different religions. Moreover, during the Third Round Table Conference in London in 1932, Mohammad Iqbal explained his idea of autonomy, stating that, unless there is autonomy for Muslims within the Union government, the Muslims would lose their cultural and religious identity/entity in the midst of an overwhelming Hindu majority. Iqbal had, no doubt, genuine concern for the unity and integrity of India. The finest example of his love and concern for undivided India is his patriotic ghazal, *Tarana-e-Hind* (anthem of Hindustan): "*Saare-jahaan-se-achcha-Hindustan-hamara* . . ." originally published in the weekly journal, *Ittehad* on 6th August 1904, which, later became an anthem of opposition to the British rule in India.

The Muslims of India, as well as the subcontinent, are mostly 'converts' in Naipaul's term; they are not migrants in the literal sense. Islam came to India and South Asia as a whole, with Arab traders, as stated before (reference Romila Thapar), in the early seventh century, much before the Muslim invasions of India. It was with the advent of Islam, that, the Arabs became a prominent cultural force in the world, while the merchants and traders became the carriers and propagators of Islam. In India, the first community to convert to Islam, were the Mappilas, in the Malabar region and through whom, other natives along the

coast, converted to Islam (during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century), much before the 'invaders' coming from the north-west. Therefore, it is not justified to accept Naipaul's assumption which maintains that, Islam came only with the 'invaders' sweeping down from the north-west, looting the temples of Hindustan and imposed the 'faith' on the 'infidel' (at the point of the sword, which remains implied). However, except a few raiders, significant among whom Sultan Mehmud, Timur Lang and Nadir Shah, who were attracted by India's wealth and treasure and whose mission was to loot and plunder, all other incomers from central Asia, claimed this land, and became part of India.

Naipaul might well be influenced by V. D. Savarkar's[22] *Hindutva/Who is a Hindu?* (1923) as he considers Muslims as looters, plunderers and invaders, who have wounded and ruined the ancient Hindu civilization of India and hardly contributed anything to this civilization. The notable Scottish writer and historian William Dalrymple makes an interesting study in his essay "*Sir Vidia Gets it Badly Wrong*," published in the *Outlook* magazine about Naipaul's lack of historical sense. Dalrymple argues that Naipaul's works about India from *An Area of Darkness* to the present, mainly occupy the vandalism and pillage done by Muslim invasions that have left a mortal wound to this ancient civilization. Yet, Naipaul is unable to see the positive aspects of Islamic civilization that has enriched the culture and civilization of India. For Dalrymple, Naipaul may be a writer of great brilliance but his "credentials as a historian are, however, much less secure . . . Even the Taj and the magnificent garden tombs of the Mughal emperors are to Naipaul symbols of oppression . . . [and] indeed it takes an unusual perversity to see one of the world's most beautiful buildings merely as a piece of cultural vandalism. Nevertheless, Naipaul's entirely negative

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[22] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was a revolutionary activist from Maharastra and was the proponent of Hindu nationalist political ideology called *Hindutva*. He was a poet and a distinguished author.

understanding of India's Islamic history has its roots firmly in the mainstream imperial historiography of Victorian Britain." (*Outlook*, March 15, 2004) Naipaul's ideas, therefore, argues Dalrymple, rest on a set of ignorant and Islamophobic assumptions, which recent scholarship has done much to undermine. Naipaul undermines the composite nature of India's culture and civilization, the harmonious coexistence of the Hindus and the Muslims, their cultural, intellectual and artistic hybridity. He views medieval Indian history as one long tale of defeat and destruction. Dalrymple rightly argues:

> Today most serious historians tend instead to emphasize the perhaps surprising degree to which Hinduism and Islam creatively intermingled and 'chutnified' (to use Salman Rushdie's nice term). The historians do not see the two religions as in any way irreconcilable; instead they tend to take the view that "the actual history of religious exchange suggests that there have never been clearly fixed groups, one labelled 'Hindu'—and the other both its opposite and rival—labelled 'Muslim'." Indeed . . . there is not a single medieval Sanskrit inscription that identifies "Indo-Muslim invaders in terms of their religion, as Muslims", but instead they refer more generally in terms of "linguistic affiliation, most typically as Turk, 'Turushka'." The import of this is clear: that the political groupings we today identify as 'Muslim' were then "construed as but one ethnic community in India amidst many others". (*Outlook*, March 15, 2004)

However, much later, just before the turn of the century, a professor of Harvard, Samuel P. Huntington, in his book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (1996), deals with conflicts that arise out of cultural and religious differences. He observes that, in the 21st century, after the era of the Cold-War, the main cause of conflicts in the world will be civilizational and not ideological. He maintains that, people's religious and

cultural identities are going to be the main cause of conflict at this age. Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' theory and Naipaul's idea of the 'universal civilization' will be discussed in the next chapter.

Sumit Sarkar, another noted historian, points out that, Savarkar's work as a foundation text for Hindu communalism, began with an emphasis upon *pitribhumi* (fatherland), and soon equated it with *punyabhumi* (holy land), the latter being defined as "the cradle-land of his religion" (qtd. in Sarkar, 2006: 362). Therefore, only Hindus could be the true patriots, and not the Indian Muslims or Christians, whose holy lands lie in Arabia or Palestine. Sarkar further points out that the "edge of this entire, exclusivist argument is clearly directed against them [Muslims and Christians] and not against British colonial rulers who never claimed India to be either *pitribhumi* or *punyabhumi*" (Sarkar, 2006: 362). It is a tragic pity, that, Indian Muslims have to prove that they are the sons of the soil, to claim India as their *pitribhimi* as well as *punyabhumi*. Like the 'converts' of his sheer imagination, Naipaul himself misses the holy places in the transplanted colony in the New World, and being haunted by that missing past of religious sacredness, he has tried to find an alternative vehicle to express his grief, rage and neurosis. The island of Trinidad had no sacred places, and, nearly after four decades of his leaving the colony, Naipaul identifies that lack. In the plantation colony, where the aboriginals had already been destroyed with their knowledge of the sacred places, however, if there were any, Naipaul has to say "people like us whose sacred places were in another continent" (BB, 2005: 59).

Again, Thapar has rightly pointed out that, all Muslims are not same traditionally, culturally or linguistically. For example, a Bengali Muslim is significantly different from a Bihari Muslim, a Punjabi Muslim or a Malayali Muslim in regard to language, tradition, culture and taste, except that they are the believers of Islam. As a case in point, it has been observed that the marriage ceremony among Bangladeshi Muslims in Dhaka is exactly

identical in social rites to a Hindu marriage in Kolkata, except for a few markers of religious rituals. As it has already been discussed in the previous chapter, that, religion is not the all encompassing identity of a person, there are many other affiliations a person simultaneously subscribes to. Therefore, it is evident that, the responsibility, behind the partition of India, lies on both Hindu and Muslim political leaders, and not the 'faith' alone, as presumed by Naipaul. The demand for Pakistan, as a separate homeland for the Muslims, was not the demand of the Muslim masses, and hence, a vast multitude of the Muslims remained in India. Rashid, Amir and his father, and many others whom Naipaul meets, are among those who did not migrate; they stayed behind, but, stayed with the life of deprivation, insecurity and 'rage' (a common word for Naipaul) in ghettos of Bombay, Lucknow and elsewhere.

This study, however, does not intend to argue on the issue of 'faith,' which Naipaul believes to be the all encompassing identity of the 'converts,' and makes it responsible for the partition of India and for the creation of a separate Muslim state. But, it is necessary to discuss about the all pervasive nature of the 'faith,' in order to remove the misconceptions. It may be ironical, that the *mohajirs* as Muslims, are fighting against the fellow Muslims of local clans like Sindhis, Pathans and Punjabis, or in Naipaul's words, it is a kind of "*jihad* upon *jihad*, holy war upon holy war" (BB, 2005: 358); the defeat of the religious parties by the *mohajir* student movement in university politics, may sound ironical, because, Naipaul discovers that "it was the faith that had driven the *mohajirs* to Pakistan" and again, "it was in those religious parties that the first generation of *mohajirs* had felt most at home" (BB, 2005: 376). Naipaul's assessment, therefore, has a tendency towards generalization. What Naipaul misses to trace, in fact, is that, the followers of the 'faith' are not following it as true believers. He has misjudged Islam, perhaps, due to his limited knowledge on Islam and the misconceptions that exist today about Islam. Not only Islam, it seems that Naipaul's understanding of politics, too, is unhappily circumscribed. Islam is to be judged not by its

followers, some of whom are Muslim in name, but, their day to day activities are against Islam. Islam cannot be judged by what its followers do, but, what its followers are supposed to do. In *Among the Believers*, Mir Mirza of Pakistan, tells Naipaul when the latter goes to take his interview, that, Islam is “a complete way of life” (AB, 2003: 130), but, Naipaul has no time to understand the meaning or to go to the depth of it. As it is claimed in Chapter II, he seems to be in a hurry; he wants to know about the “Islamization of institutions” (AB, 2003: 128), and to find about the “application of Islam to institutions, to government, to law” (AB, 2003: 129). Elsewhere, he tells Mr. Deen, also a migrant from India, that, he wants to see “Islam in action” (AB, 2003: 119). Therefore, one who is a pious/devout Muslim is an “Islamic hard-liner” (AB, 2003: 130) or a “fundamentalist” (BB, 2005: 312), in Naipaul’s assessment: he may be an Ayatollah; a “simplest mullah” (AB, 2003: 130) like Mir Mirza (who is not really a mullah); the newspaper editor Salahuddin; the lawyer and Indian migrant in Karachi, Khalid Ishaq; or Imaduddin, the muezzin’s son from Landkat in Sumatra, with his mental training at Bandung Institute of Technology, who believes “everyone a born Muslim, without sin . . . Islam means submission” (BB, 2005: 50). So, Islam means peace acquired through submission to the will of Allah (the almighty). Those, who do not work for peace, and instead, indulge in violence and other extremist activities, are not the true believers of Islam. It is unfortunate that, today, Muslims are viewed as ‘terrorists,’ ‘fundamentalists’ and ‘jihadis’ (a term often misused), while the terms such as ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ or ‘Islamic Terrorism’ have become synonymous to Islam, due to anti-Islam propaganda in the West and elsewhere. What Naipaul refers to as Muslim ‘rage’ has complex roots, and should be resolved through dialogues, and not certainly through antagonism and divisive policies which are responsible for civilizational ‘clash’ and global anarchy. The Muslims, all over the globe and especially in the subcontinent, suffer from

insecurity and hence, their identity needs to be redefined due to the ambivalent nature of their existence.

Naipaul repeatedly argues in *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief*, that, by its Islamization of laws, the implementation of Qura'nic (Naipaul uses the term Koranic) punishments, the veiling of women etc., Pakistan is taken by the fundamentalists "back and back, to the seventh century, to the time of the Prophet" (BB, 2005: 269). It is true that the Islam of the seventh century, or of the few centuries that followed, was not as tainted as today. The believers, whom Naipaul encounters and whom Abul Ala Maudoodi[23], the founder of the so-called fundamentalist group, *Jamaat-e-Islami*, does not consider to be good enough as Muslims for an all-Muslim state, and moreover, they "were not pure enough in their belief," because they "were too tainted by the Indian past" (BB, 2005: 312) i.e. the pre-Islamic or Buddhist-Hindu past. This is Naipaul's painstaking discovery. He projects Maudoodi, a radical Islamist, as the representative figure of Muslims of the subcontinent. But, in fact, Maudoodi and his revolutionary modernist ideology together with radical Islamist philosophies are rejected by the majority Muslims of the subcontinent. He is projected by Naipaul as a man of contradiction or double standard in order to appropriate the alleged contradiction or double moral standard of the Muslims in the non-Arab Islamic societies, who, says Naipaul, emotionally reject the West, while craving for its scientific inventions and technologies. His depiction of the character of Maudoodi as a representative figure of the Muslims, is, utterly misleading and a severe blow to Islam, as he intends to blame the 'faith' of the believers. It is, however, not difficult to understand the implied irony

[23] Syed Abul Ala Maudoodi, was born in Aurangabad in the British India. A great scholar, philosopher and Islamic thinker, he was the founder of *Jamaat-e-Islami*, a Muslim revivalist organization. Initially, Maudoodi was against the idea of the creation of Pakistan. However, with partition in 1947, he moved to Lahore in Pakistan. He had a strong view about Islam and the Muslims saying that Muslims were not "good enough" for an "all-Muslim state" (BB, 2005: 312).

and in-depth criticism that are intended on Naipaul's part about the nature and existence of the Muslim 'converts' of the subcontinent.

Naipaul has committed a similar mistake or error of judgment when he has tried to project the leader of Islamic revolution in Iran of the late seventies, Ayatollah Khomeini, as the representative figure of the Muslims in the non-Arab Muslim world. But, Naipaul has made a serious blunder in this regard. Khomeini might be a great spiritual leader for the people of Iran, but, in reality,

> . . . he is no more than mere fanatic to the rest of the Muslim world. The Iranian people have upheld him for his great zeal and energy by which he had delivered his people from the thraldom of western culture and ethos, by bringing them back to a fresh revival of Islamic faith, but the Muslims of other parts of the world have never approved his fanatic action of executing a large number of people, and of his various fanatic decisions. Till today, he remains the controversial figure in the Muslim world and therefore he can never be taken to represent the entire Muslims. (Khan, 1998: 103)

It can, therefore, be said that Naipaul's assessment of Islam and the non-Arab Islamic society lacks truth and proper judgment due to his sheer ignorance about Islam and most importantly due to his Eurocentric bias.

III

Naipaul's presence in the postcolonial world, a world which is fragmented due to colonization, is utterly ambivalent. Likewise, the transplanted Indian migrants to Trinidad, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, African countries and elsewhere, whose history and root had been cut off, whose ethnicity and identity had been submerged in the process of

deterritorialization, hybridization and futile attempts of reterritorialization, whose sacred places as mentioned before, are lying in another continent, are the victims of colonization. The Indian indentured labourers, who were transplanted and juxtaposed with the African Negro slaves (who were set free after the abolition of slavery) in the New World, was done for the interest of the colonizers who needed cheap labour for the plantations in the colonies, however, had calamitous effect on the uprooted people. Akhtar Jamal Khan[24] rightly observes about the transfer of the uprooted people in the Caribbean islands, in his scholarly work *V. S. Naipaul: A Critical Study* (1998), that:

> Naipaul sees their uprooting from their ancestral lands and transportation to the New World as one of the most futile transfers of population in recent history. The bringing together of peoples from different continents neither enriched the land nor the people; it simply produced new tensions . . . Different races were brought together not for creating a new civilization but simply for economic exploitations. (Khan, 1998: 9)

Colonialism or imperialism therefore, has had an adverse affect on the colonized people. Frantz Fanon and the noted postcolonial critic, Ashis Nandy consider that, both imperialism and colonialism have brought complete disorder and even disintegration to colonized lands and peoples by disconnecting them from their histories, landscapes, languages, customs and beliefs, ways of looking and feeling.

It is said that colonialism has been a process of systematic fragmentation. This fragmentation is accelerated by *Eurocentrism* through hegemonization and erasure of ethnic or indigenous cultures. *Eurocentrism* is an attitude which uses European culture as the standard to which all other cultures are negatively contrasted. Naipaul is a classic case study

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[24] Akhtar Jamal Khan is an Associate Professor of English Literature at Christ College, Cuttack in Orissa. As a distinguished scholar, he obtained his PhD from Utkal University.

of these diasperactive forces, transcending simplistic ambivalence. Naipaul's life too, has been fragmented time and again due to the encounter between the self or the writer (the assimilated British/mimic man) and the Other (the ethnic Indian native of a transplanted British colony). By his assimilation of the British/European culture, language and life-style, Naipaul could neither become a mainstream British, nor could he remain or identify himself as an ethnic Indian Trinidadian with distinct ethno-cultural identity. Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez,[25] in her essay, "*Postcolonial Blues: Ambivalence and Alienation in the Autobiographies of Richard Rodriguez and V. S. Naipaul*," observes that, both Rodriguez and Naipaul write in the perspective of their family backgrounds, Mexican and Trinidadian respectively, but they do so as 'assimilated' American or British subjects and "look at themselves autobiographically through the eyes of the colonizer" (*Auto/Biography Studies*, Vol.12, No.2: 151). Browdy further observes that due to their longing for the mainstream society, its education and value systems, Rodriguez and Naipaul have become alienated from their cultural heritages/roots by identifying themselves with the dominant American or British culture and civilization respectively. With reference to Albert Memmi[26], she rightly observes that by rejecting their ties with their respective marginal communities and by assimilating themselves with the mainstream society, they mimic the colonizer/colonial master in a way what Memmi has described in his *Portrait du Colonise*`(1957) (which Browdy paraphrases somewhat this way): they make every effort to resemble the colonizer so that he (the colonizer) will cease to recognize them (the colonized) as different from him;

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[25] Jennifer Browdy de Harnandez teaches English at Simon's Rock College of Bard, a distinguished college in the US for young scholars. Her areas of scholarly research include: Latin American women writers, Caribbean literature, ethnic American writers, postcolonial theory and feminist theory.

[26] Albert Memmi was a Tunisian born Jewish writer who later migrated to France. He found himself at the crossroads of three cultures: Jewish, Arabic and French and based his work on the difficulty of finding a balance between these three.

their effort to obliterate the past starts with their enthusiastic adoption of the language, culture and values of the West (Browdy, 151). Thus, both of them and Naipaul in particular, alienates himself from his ethnic and cultural roots in favour of mainstream or dominant society located in the metropolitan centre of the world. To achieve this end, his education, his ambition and the idea of a literary vocation that goes with that civilization, as he believes, become the vehicle or the marker of his identity and existence.

Naipaul's father, Seepersad Naipaul, had given great emphasis on education of his children right from their childhood and subsequently, apart from colonial education, they are driven by an urge for mainstream English education. This becomes their goal. Naipaul, for example, becomes a scholarship boy and resultantly his education and ambition to become a writer not only shape his future identity but also play a vital role in his existence as a postcolonial migrant writer.

To become a writer, it was necessary for Naipaul, to come out of his restricted colonial world that did not consort with the grandeur of his ambition. Again, on his arrival in England he was soon to realize how unprepared he was in that 'unaccommodating' outside world. However, his sense of an 'unaccommodating' world amidst the grandeur of the decaying Victorian-Edwardian manor, which he describes in his autobiographical work *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), its ancillary buildings and gardens; their wealth actually came from the empire where sadly, his ancestral past, the poverty and the smallness of the island colony in Trinidad could neither prepare him nor could give him enough security. He writes in *The Enigma of Arrival*, his "insecure past—peasant India, colonial smallness that did not consort with the grandeur" of his ambition and his uprooting of himself for a writing career, his coming to England with "so little" had given him a "raw sense of the unaccommodating world" (TEA, 2002: 99). Yet, the wish to be a writer, though conditioned by his colonial and half-English education and restricted by his colonial setting, ruled all his life:

> The noblest impulse of all—the wish to be a writer, the wish that ruled my life—was the impulse that was the most imprisoning, the most insidious, and in some ways the most corrupting, because, refined by my half-English half-education and ceasing then to be a pure impulse, it had given me a false idea of the activity of the mind. The noblest impulse in that colonial setting had been the most hobbling. To be what I wanted to be, I had to cease to be or to grow out of what I was. To become a writer it was necessary to shed many of the early ideas that went with the ambition, and the concept my half-education had given me of the writer. (TEA, 2002: 167)

The very first sentence of *A Bend in the River* (1979) gives a clear idea of a man's indomitable urge to become something: "The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing have no place in it" (2002: 3). Salim, the protagonist, may not find the place in the bend in the river, to call his own, but he comes to this destroyed town, leaving his family and community behind in the coast in order to make a fresh start. Naipaul too, leaves his small community of Indians and the island behind in order to make a fresh start like Salim to become something. He has always longed to escape from the 'void' of his island, which is a 'dot' on the map of the world. His Western education and sensibility has no doubt, made him a distinguished writer and a member of the mainstream metropolitan society, yet, as a migrant, his dilemma, like any other postcolonial migrants, is to locate or place himself in the outside world. Naipaul, however, gets success through assimilation to the mainstream society at the 'centre' or the 'universal civilization' as he calls it, by his rejection of his ethnic and cultural heritage but he has to pay a high price for it. His works reveal a profound sense of homelessness and alienation resulting to a kind of ambivalence in his existence and his obsessive longing for cultural root and his subsequent realization of the personal loss or deep tragedy underlying that assimilation. His memoirs, travelogues and a

few genre-defying books such as *The Enigma of Arrival* reveal the ambivalent nature of his existence in an alien world, where, as Browdy has observed, through his longing and laments for the lost ethnic and cultural roots, he recreates a space or location and an identity which designates him as a literary nomad and a struggling postcolonial subject like the transplanted Indian migrants in the New World. He is caught in a limbo and his struggle is the struggle of a postcolonial marginal subject even though he seems to be representing the metropolitan or mainstream society.

Homi Bhabha describes such a condition of migrancy as a state of 'indeterminacy' or 'in-betweenness' in which the migrant is defined by a separation from origins and essences and as a result, a sense of 'un-homeliness' occupies his mind in that indeterminate zone or what he calls the 'third space.' In his essay entitled "*Of Mimicry and Man*," Bhabha argues that, colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'other' which is constructed around ambivalence, as "a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite" (qtd. in Desai and Nair, 2005: 266). The ambivalent world of the postcolonial subject, whose image is, 'not quite/not white,' or almost the same but not quite, is, in fact, a colonial creation. The European learning and power has produced a group of such people or, in the words of Thomas Babington Macaulay,[27] who wrote in 1819 of "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Desai and Nair, 2005: 267), who, in other words, are the mimic men raised through English/European institutions. It had been a part of colonialist or *Eurocentric* ideology on the basis of which European institutions

[27] Thomas Babington Macaulay was a British historian, an essayist and a poet who was also involved with politics. While in India, he laid the foundations of colonial learning by making English as a medium of instruction during colonial period. He was the first Law Member in the Governor-General's Office in India and is known for his "Minute on Education" (1835).

were established in the colonies to inculcate the culture and values of the West in the native people. The colonized people or the colonial subjects, thus, could not resist the colonial subjugation because they were taught to believe in European superiority and their own inferiority.

While longing for an escape from the unpleasantness of his 'shipwrecked' island for a land of snow and mountains, which is believed to be the source of learning and knowledge, Naipaul's Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men* speaks of the plight of the colonial mimic men: "We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World . . ." (TMM, 2002: 157). He who believes that the true, pure world exists somewhere on the snow slopes and simply by handling books and goods in this world that actually came from another world, and his pretence to be real, to be learning and preparing for life, actually display his colonial mimicry. On the other hand, for Bhabha, *writing* is a mode of representation that emerges from mimesis and mimicry. This is true with Naipaul whose writing constructs his identity. Sigmund Freud says of such mimicry as a form of difference — *almost the same but not quite*: "Their mixed and split origin is what decides their fate. We may compare them with individuals of mixed race who taken all round resemble white men but who betray their coloured descent by some striking feature or other and on that account are excluded from society and enjoy none of the privileges" (qtd. in Desai and Nair, 2005: 269).

Naipaul's ambition to be a writer comes from his father Seepersad Naipaul who was a journalist in the Trinidad *Guardian*. This was certainly an unusual occupation for a Trinidad Indian of his generation who was supposed to work in the sugar plantations, being the descendant of an indentured migrant. In his essay "*Prologue to an Autobiography*," Naipaul writes in this regard:

> The ambition to be a writer was given me by my father. He was a journalist . . . an unusual occupation for a Trinidad Indian of his generation. My father was born in 1906. At that time the Indians of Trinidad were a separate community, mainly rural and Hindi-speaking, attached to the sugar estates of central and southern Trinidad. Many of the Indians of 1906 had been born in India and had come out to Trinidad as indentured labourers on five-year contracts. (LO, 2004: 67)

Moreover, in his essay "*Reading and Writing*," Naipaul writes in the very opening lines: "I was eleven, no more, when the wish came to me to be a writer; and then very soon it was a settled ambition" (LO, 2004: 3). This essay, as the subtitle suggests, is Naipaul's personal account and deals mostly with his ambition and the making of a writer in him. In a review of *Literary Occasions: Essays* (2003), Rajnish Wattas observes that the essay reveals his "life-long search for identity and the concerns of a diaspora writer. It was the genesis of the writer feeling disconnected with both 'home' and 'away' — his childhood Trinidadian Hindu society and his 'Mother Civilizations' in faraway India and farther away in Britain . . . Perhaps no writer has analyzed his own identity, writerly ambition and its eventual blooming as much as Naipaul has" (*Spectrum,* December 7, 2003).

Naipaul's father, as said before, was a *Guardian* staff correspondent in the little town of Chaguanas when Naipaul was born in 1932. But, unlike other Indians who were still contract labourers, Naipaul's mother's family were the big landowners in Chaguanas which was the heart of the sugar area, the Indian area of Trinidad where his grandparents had rolled a 'miniature India' like a carpet on the flat land. Naipaul's father had spent a half-dependent, half-independent life without a house of his own till the last moment of his life when he was able to own a house that entangled him to debt and his premature death. Two or three years after Naipaul was born, his father left the *Guardian* and did some odd jobs here and there and

it was really a tough time for him, as Naipaul says, "now attached to my mother's family now going back to the protection of an uncle by marriage . . . Poor himself, with close relations who were still agricultural labourers, my father dangled all his life in a half-dependence and half-esteem between these two powerful families" (LO, 2004: 68).

At this point of time, another migration took place. Naipaul's father was taken back by the *Guardian* as a city reporter. Hence, they — his father, mother and five children, their own nucleus within his mother's extended family, as Naipaul calls it, moved to yet another house in Port of Spain that belonged to his maternal grandmother. It had been a crucial time in the life of young Naipaul who was introduced to the life of the street with all sorts of people including Hat, Bogart, Man-Man and Popo, the Negro carpenter who makes 'things without a name,' and many others who have been represented in his comic novel *Miguel Street* (1959). It was also the time when he came in touch with his father and could know him because he had lived in his grandmother's family house in Chaguanas before. He only knew then that he had a father, but unlike the fathers of his other cousins in his grandmother's extended family, his father was not present and hence, for him "the man himself remained vague" (LO, 2004: 68).

The days in Port of Spain with its sparkling and yet diverse street life and daily newspapers as 'printed objects,' were the most happy days of Naipaul's childhood, as he says, "it was the richest and most serene time of my childhood" (LO, 2004: 72). But, again, crisis waited in the life of the migrant. The happy days lasted only for a few years when his maternal grandmother had decided to leave Chaguanas in order to move to the hills to the north-west of Port of Spain after she bought an estate. So, the whole family with all its dependent branches, had to move there, including the Naipauls. Thus, after an ordered and serene life, they now returned to the hubbub of his grandmother's extended family as a scattered non-entity. There were many problems in that extended family where quarrels,

shortage of foodstuff and space etc. had been daily affairs and hence his father used to get away from the chaos. It happened many a time that, for a long period, Naipaul could not see his father. But in Port of Spain, though the father and the son could unite and live together, yet, they lived a homeless and humiliating life under pressure with lot of people of his grandmother's branches coming to that house where they were "squeezed into less and less space" (LO, 2004: 73). In such a shut in world, where insecurity, alienation and homelessness were common phenomena, Naipaul had known nothing of the outside world:

> Growing up within my extended family, knowing nothing else, looking at everything else from outside, I had no social sense, no sense of other societies; and as a result, reading (mainly English books) was difficult for me. I couldn't enter worlds that were not like mine. (LO, 2004: 75)

Another crucial and interesting matter is that, Naipaul always had the fascination with the printed objects, such as those of his father's reportages in the *Guardian* and his father's other printed stories. Hence, at an early age, it was settled in his mind as well his father's, that, he was to be a writer. His scholarship to Oxford was rather a means to escape, as he says: "I decided to use mine [scholarship] to do English at Oxford. I didn't want a degree; I wanted only to get away . . ." (LO, 2004: 77). But, writing was not that easy, though, he thought, in the years of scholarship at Oxford, his talent would somehow grow and be revealed, so that, the books would start writing themselves.

To become a writer, therefore, Naipaul had thought it necessary to leave, just as the narrator of *Miguel Street* leaves: "I had left them all and walked briskly towards the aeroplane, not looking back, looking only at my shadow before me, a dancing dwarf on the tarmac" (2003: 179). The migration for a writing career, for Naipaul, actually involved many sacrifices including the painful loss of culture with a stigma of enigmatic (postcolonial) identity and the trauma of a missing past, which always haunts him. Moreover, writing at the

initial stage, as stated earlier, was not that easy when one finds himself barren and drained of materials. Naipaul writes in this regard: "To become a writer, that noble thing, I had thought it necessary to leave. Actually to write, it was necessary to go back" (LO, 2004: 79).

So, the middle passage becomes necessary and it eventually supplies with the materials, the society, the standards and their smallness — he needs for his books. But, at the same time, Naipaul despises the colonial society for not meeting the values and standards of the West. He might be well entangled in the Manichean[28] idea of the postcolonial world prescribed by Abdul R. JanMohamed[29], that, the postcolonial situation/world is a bifurcated world which is cut into two binary opposites: the colonizer and the colonized. The colonized world is seen as inferior 'other' due to its smallness, ethnicity, failure, dependency, blackness or colourness etc. Naipaul, too, is not free from the bias of Manichean colonial stereotyping which tends to homogenize ethnicity and colour with that of failure, sterility, dependency, powerlessness and smallness. So, the colour of the skin and colonial/third World background is equated with failure and also as a barrier against the fulfillment of one's lifetime ambition.

The identity of the postcolonial marginal subject(s) whose future and achievements are conditioned by their society, often considered 'half-made':

> The small islands of the Caribbean will remain islands, impoverished and unskilled . . . their people not needed anywhere . . . The island blacks will continue to be dependent on the books, films, and goods of others; in this important way they will continue to be the half-made societies of a dependent

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[28] Manichean or Manichaeism is a doctrine of religious or philosophical dualism professed by Manes in Persia in the 3rd century. This philosophy divides the world between good and evil on the principle of binary opposition.

[29] Abdul Raheman JanMohamed is a Kenyan born professor of English at University of California, Berkeley. He is the founder editor of the journal *Cultural Critique*. His works explore the politics of literature and the nature of discourse in colonial and postcolonial cultures, and demonstrate the cultural resistance of the colonized.

> people, the Third World's third world. They will forever consume; they will never create. They are without material sources; they will never develop the higher skills. Identity depends in the end on achievement; and achievement here cannot but be small. (TWW, 2003: 137-38)

Naipaul has taken the notion of 'half-made' society from his Polish predecessor, Joseph Conrad and to whom he is greatly indebted to especially for his (Conrad's) dark vision of human life and existence. Conrad's *Nostromo* (1904) provides for Naipaul the vision of the world's 'half-made' societies, which are said to be 'borrowed,' 'mimic' and without any goal, where, achievement cannot but be small. The Western bias that works in his mind makes him to consider those societies as 'half-made' because they fall short of the standards and values of the West. What Naipaul considers to be Western or 'universal civilization,' is, in reality, the culmination of the 'plundering' of the rest of the world which are now labeled as 'half-made' societies. The discussion on the issues of contesting civilization(s): the Western (often referred to as 'universal' civilization) and the civilization of the rest will be carried on in the next chapter.

In order to locate the issues of migrant identity and existence in the postcolonial world, Stuart Hall's idea of unfixed/multiple identity and Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity,' 'mimicry' and 'third space' will help to further the argument in this study to locate the migrant's (Naipaul's) existential position as a man of 'two worlds' or a "citizen of the world" (IFS, 2002: 3). Contemporary existence is experienced in fragmented state. Concepts or status like alienation, unhomeliness, schizophrenia and diasperaction may be used to describe contemporary life, more specifically, of the diaspora. In Naipaul's *In a Free State* (1971), the tramp at Piraeus, questions over the nationality, national identity in an era of globalization, where, the postcolonial subject is on constant move/travel like the movement of capital and technology. The postcolonial migrant, having been away from 'home' and having the

experience of non-belonging, starts vacillating between ‘home’ and the place of migration/exile. The utter ambivalent nature of his existence, constantly reminds him of his uncertain position and as a result, the migrant develops in him an idea of imagined ‘home’ which has no geo-political boundary like Naipaul’s tramp in *In a Free State* who considers himself a citizen of the world.

For Naipaul, identity is always to be constructed and achieved since he believes that “identity depends . . . on achievement” (TWW, 2003: 138). In the process of identity formation, however, Naipaul may denounce his West Indian home and identity, yet, he travels through mimicry and hybridity in metropolitan England. Through his travels, Naipaul translates himself into a hybridized postcolonial subject who is shaped by multiple hybrid locations and most importantly, due to his mimicry of Western culture, sensibility, life-style and manners, he attempts to (re)define his position and identity. Later, through his journeys in search of ancestral and cultural roots, he, finally, reconstructs his identity through his multicultural plurality and through writing (as a mode of representation and self-definition). Writing is his career and it will not be wrong to say that, writing is Naipaul and Naipaul is writing. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, he writes, “With me, everything started from writing. Writing had brought me to England, had sent me away from England . . .” (TEA, 2002: 185). He translates everything about him and the world around him, in his writing; everything about him of value and importance, is, in his books: “I am the sum of my books” (Nobel Lecture, December, 2001).

Naipaul believes that, to write is to travel, which eventually becomes the *vice versa* — to travel is to write. Travel, for him, is a kind of language that translates different types of people and places to come together and like a marvel, it makes possible to reach the world’s largest and capital cities outside his small island within hours. He has always believed that outside his little island, another large world had always existed, like the sun above the clouds

always there even when unperceived (TEA, 2002: 114). Travel certainly changes his perception, his personality and his world-view; it rescues him from the smallness of his island with limited opportunities and resources. At an early age, Naipaul becomes aware of this lack of opportunity among all the poverty and barrenness of Trinidad and the idea of the high civilization which is connected with the English language. Writing, he believes, needs a particular kind of society which possesses certain degree of commercial organizations and also, it has certain cultural or imaginative needs. He says in his Manhattan speech in 1990, about such privileged society: ". . . This kind of society didn't exist in Trinidad. It was necessary, therefore, if I was going to be a writer, and live by my books, to travel out to that kind of society where the writing life was possible . . . I was travelling from the periphery, the margin, to . . . the centre" (TWW, 2003: 506). Travel has taken him out of his island, it has furthered his pursuit of writing and enriched his vision and knowledge of the world, yet, he says, he could not be that kind of writer like Dickens, Huxley, Lawrence, and Waugh who had metropolitan background and audience and had knowledge of the past. Naipaul, on the other hand, had no knowledge of his past; the past, for most of his community, ended abruptly with their grandfathers and beyond that, they "could not see" (LO, 2004: 20), in other words, they had no history. He regrets that, great novelists wrote about highly organized societies and he had no such society. His was a colonial world: mixed, 'second-hand,' restricted and 'barbarous' society where nothing could be created. Even in metropolitan England, for him, the literary centre of the world, he has to suffer to get his material for writing. For his many moves, nearly all his adult life that have been spent in different countries, Naipaul has remained a stranger.

As regards culture and identity in a diasporic situation, Stuart Hall, however, makes a fluid interpretation of culture and identity which emphasizes on multiple identities. For Hall, identity makings are never singular but multiple and are constructed across different (often

intersecting and antagonistic) discourses, practices and positions (Hall and Gay, 1996: 4). In another essay entitled "*Thinking the Diaspora: Home Thoughts from Abroad*" (1999), Hall emphasizes on the post-war Caribbean migration to Britain. He has dealt with the question of diaspora (especially Caribbean diasporas), their fate and their complexities in building/imagining [Caribbean] nationhood and identity. Hall's central question in this essay, is, how the diasporas living thousand of miles away from 'home,' imagine their 'nation' (as one prescribed by Benedict Anderson who opines that nations are not only sovereign entities but 'imagined communities'); their 'national identity' and their relation to 'home' and the nature of their 'belongingness.' The migrants, actually, can never get separated from their roots, they hang in a balance between two locations or cultures, and it is true, not only to the black Caribbean and other migrants, but also, to Naipaul as well, who can never shed off his ancestral peasant Indian root.

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, in the chapter entitled "The Journey," Naipaul says that even after moving out of his island for the journey from the 'periphery' to the metropolitan 'centre,' he could not totally get rid of his peasant and Asiatic Hindu ways (for their distrust of food and fear of pollution). Though he was close to the village ways of his Asian-Indian community which was separated from peasant India, only by two or three generations in a plantation colony of the New World, and had an instinctive understanding of and sympathy for its rituals, yet, he knew little of his agricultural colony and never participated in the rituals of his community. Even, he knew nothing of other communities, except that he had the prejudices of his time in that colonial and racially mixed setting. Like a true Asiatic Hindu peasant, he hated the idea of eating food from foreign hands, and in contrast, simultaneously he had the dream of fulfillment in another country (TEA, 2002: 120). In order to fulfill his dream for a literary life in another country, he had to withdraw from his small Asiatic peasant community and devote himself into deep and consuming studies. He writes:

> I knew very little about the agricultural colony in the New World where I was born. And of my Asiatic Hindu community, a transplanted peasant community, I knew only my extended family. All my life … had been devoted to study, study of the abstract sort … and then this idea of abstract study had been converted into an idea of literary life in another country . . . My real life, my literary life, was to be elsewhere. (TEA, 2002: 126)

As for the question of identity and belongingness, Naipaul writes in *The Enigma of Arrival*, that, he has never felt at home or never has stopped considering himself to be a stranger in rural or metropolitan England, where he is always haunted by his 'stranger's nerves.' For him, those nerves had been given to him as a child in Trinidad, which was partly due to their family circumstances — the half-ruined or broken-down houses where they lived, their many moves and their general uncertainty (TEA, 2002: 55). Such mode of feeling, for him, was a kind of ancestral inheritance that came with the history that had made him — the transportation of his impoverished Indian ancestors to the colonial plantations in the New World in the late nineteenth century. For Naipaul, the migration within the British Empire, from India to the estates of Trinidad, had given him the English language as his own and a particular kind of education, which had seeded his wish to be a writer and brought him to England, particularly his stay in the (decaying) Wiltshire estate which was a kind of apotheosis; but the history he carried with him with an awareness that he had come with his education and ambition, had actually, sent him into the world of dead glory and had given him "the rawest stranger's nerves" (TEA, 2002: 55-56). The migrant writer has to make a great bargain in the game of gain and loss — he might get a happier life as if a second childhood in the woods, unlike the darker, gloomier and impoverished one in his maternal grandmother's extended family in Trinidad, but he had to bear the labour and disappointments of the writing life, the pain of being away from home and having no place of

his own. Both time and space had separated him from his past and he felt "always a stranger, a foreigner, a man who had left his island and community before maturity, before adult social experience" (TEA, 2002: 266). That is why, even after recreating a second childhood of rural Trinidad, in the unlikely setting of Wiltshire manor cottage in the heart of ancient and rural England, he has found himself to be a true alien. After all his time in England, he still has the 'nervousness' and 'strangeness,' and still feels himself to be in "other man's country" (TEA, 2002: 6).

Sense of alienation and strangeness unendingly occupies the minds of the migrants. Yet, the place of their origin and their past always remain with them if not physically, but at least in their memories, in their instincts:

> We were an immigrant Asian community in a small plantation island in the New World. To me India seemed very far away, mythical, but we were at that time, in all the branches of our extended family, only about forty or fifty years out of India. We were still full of the instincts of people of Gangetic plain though year by year the colonial life around us was drawing in. (LO, 2004: 7)

Unlike the first generation migrants, the second and third generations were drawn nearer by the colonial society and English education. In his essay "*Reading and Writing*," Naipaul talks about this shift through colonial experience, that, unlike the children of previous generation[s] who happened to work in the sugar estates, the children of their generation began to attend colonial schools and adopted English language which they considered their own. When Naipaul got the exhibition from Mr. Worm's school for the first time from his Indian peasant community, others also followed him and that was considered to be a change in their life and existence. Yet it cannot be said that they got fully changed or were completely swallowed by the 'picaroon' colonial society of the New World. "Mangled bits of old India" (LO, 2004: 7) were still with them not only in the enclosed or insulated life

of their extended family, but also, in what had come to them from their community outside. They lived in the memories of people, in *Ramlila*, in Hindu rituals and village ways that had been transported from India which seemed real to them.

At that time, even going from Chaguanas to Port of Spain, only a few kilometers, a shift from peasant India to a racially mixed and creolized urban society, it was like going to another country, and the rural Indian world, the disintegrating world of a remembered India, was to be left behind (LO, 2004: 8). In the strange street of the city life, unlike the enclosed community life in peasant and rural Trinidad of Indian immigrant community, one had to find himself in a limbo. For Naipaul, after many years of his stay in the city, he has never ceased to feel himself a stranger. Even after many years of his stay in England and metropolitan London in particular, he always has felt himself an outsider.

IV

Like its people, the world is also "always in movement" (LO, 2004: 186). People at some stage, get dispossessed, people get assimilated, people get submerged by the dominant groups (as in the case of Martinique Indians), people get displaced or migrated and get changed too. Naipaul might be shocked by his insecure past history, his late discovery of his place of birth, his grandparents' indenture and transplantation in the New World at a time of 'darkness.' Yet, he is equally shocked with the dispossession and even extinction of the aboriginal people of the West Indian island in the mouth of Orinoco who had their "own kind of agriculture, their own calendar, their own codes, their own sacred sites" (LO, 2004: 186). Naipaul had no idea of his birthplace until he was 35, and already in England for over one and a half decade, since most of the Indian migrants in Trinidad, lived blindly in their

agricultural colony. For them, "what was past was past" (LO, 2004: 187) and it was a general attitude. They were well aware that, they were immigrants from India. They had the attitude that they were alien and had come temporarily to the West Indian island. As already discussed in chapter II, about the plight of those migrants in terms of their identity, they lived mostly ritualized lives, and hence, were not capable of self-assessment. They only believed that, they had brought a kind of India with them, which they could, as it were, unroll like a 'carpet' on the flat land. They were extremely helpless and vulnerable in terms of their identity and existence. In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Naipaul gives a classic description of the ambivalent nature of their identity and existence. The old men assembled in the evening in places like the arcade of Hanuman House (which represents community or collective identity), they squatted on the sacks on grounds, they smoked clay *cheelums* of *ganja*, they had scarves or turbans on their heads, and their incongruity made them look 'foreign' or alien. They considered their transplantation as purely temporary and therefore, they did not venture to learn English which they could not speak; they were not interested in the land, which was for them, a place, where they had come for a short time and stayed longer than they expected. In those evening gatherings in the alien land, they continually talked of going back to India, but, when the opportunity came, many of them refused to go back; it was because they were afraid of the poverty and darkness from where they or their parents made their final journey. Since time and space had separated them from their origin, they were afraid of the unknown, and also, were afraid to leave the "familiar temporariness" (AHMB, 2003: 201).

However, the second and third generation migrants, gradually began to get assimilated to the culturally and racially mixed society in the New World, and adopted the English language and education. As stated before, Naipaul's father wanted to become a writer, but, due to their family circumstances, their poverty and lack of opportunity, he could

not become so. He becomes a journalist. Yet, he had passed his ambition to his children and especially, to V. S. Naipaul whom he had sent to England on a scholarship, that has been already discussed. As a child, while reading books, which were offered to him in the school, and in the libraries, Naipaul always felt that, two worlds had separated him from the books: one was the childhood world of their remembered India and the other was the more colonial world of the city or the world outside their insulated peasant Indian community.

In his *Nobel Lecture*, in December, 2001, Naipaul not only describes the smallness of his community, who had been transplanted to the New World plantation colony in the late nineteenth century from Gangetic plains of India, but also shares his idea of 'two worlds.' His idea of two worlds came to him from his very childhood in his maternal grandmother's house in Trinidad, which had two mutually exclusive parts: the front part of brick and plaster with a white paint, was like an ambitiously decorated Indian style house with a balustraded terrace and a prayer room at the top, full of Hindu deities and objects of remembered India, which was an architectural oddity in Trinidad; the other part, at the back of it, however, joined by an upper bridge room, made of timber, was of the French Caribbean style. There was a tall corrugated iron-gate, between the two houses, which served as protection and privacy from the strange and unfriendly outside world. As a child, Naipaul had this sense of two worlds: the world outside that tall corrugated iron-gate and the world at home i.e. the world of his grandmother's house with rituals and ceremonies, which was for him:

> . . . a remnant of our caste sense, the thing that excluded and shut out. In Trinidad, where as new arrivals we were a disadvantaged community, that excluding idea was a kind of protection; it enabled us . . . to live in our own way and according to our own rules, to live in our own fading India . . . we lived out our days; the world outside existed in a kind of darkness. (LO, 2004: 187)

So, the world outside that corrugated iron-gate, the racially mixed colonial world, existed in a kind of darkness, and of which, they inquired about nothing. Naipaul, fortunately, had the luck to have some idea of the Indian epics, like the *Ramayana*, but, the children, who came five years or so after him in their extended family, were deprived of such cultural myths. They could not learn Hindi, which, no one taught them, and hence, gradually they were getting detached from Indian roots: "as English penetrated, we began to lose our language" (LO, 2004: 188). Since, language defines one's culture and identity, the identity and existence of these later generation migrants, remain at odds, and for them, two worlds exist together, but in exclusion, and, to neither of them could they relate and belong.

Therefore, the migrant who is torn between the two worlds, like Indar, the protagonist in *A Bend in the River*, has to redefine his identity and existence in postcolonial London, where he is denied of a job in the Indian diplomatic service, since he is a man of 'two worlds' and a "man of divided loyalties" (ABR, 2002: 173). Like Naipaul, Indar too, realizes how incapable they are, to understand, and to be accommodated by the outside world. Be it, the Caribbean or Africa, it becomes difficult for them to understand, to what extent they had been made by the place, where they had grown up, and how incapable they had become, of understanding the outside world (ABR, 2002: 165).

It is understood that, migration, as it involves the process of complex transformation, creates sense of alienation, homelessness, crisis of identity, uncertainty and above all, ambivalence in one's life and existence. For example, the Martinique Indians, who, as migrants in an alien land, with the passing of time, have become a lost community. The migrants suffer from a sense of 'unhomeliness' or 'in-betweenness' in the alien place or indeterminate zone as Bhabha puts it, and at some stage, due to ethno-cultural assimilation and mishmash, and in some cases, due to their own multi-cultural background, find themselves as a lost community, as their culture and identity not only get assimilated to the

dominant or mainstream culture, but also get lost. The postcolonial existence, therefore, is experienced in an unsettled and fragmented state, where, alienation, identity crisis, homelessness and schizophrenia describe the contemporary life of the migrants or diasporic people.

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CHAPTER - IV

A UNIVERSAL CIVILIZATION

> And if I have to describe the universal civilization I would say it is the civilization that both gave the prompting and the idea of the literary vocation; and also gave the means to fulfil that prompting, the civilization that enabled me to make the journey from the periphery to the centre …
>
> — TWW, 2003: 506-7

I

The Wriston lecture delivered by V. S. Naipaul at the Manhattan Institute of New York, on October, 1990, clearly defines Naipaul's own idea of a 'universal civilization.' His concept of the term 'universal civilization' has been questioned over the years since its use, because it has been observed that, the civilization for which Naipaul advocates, is exclusively the civilization of the West which excludes the rest. For Naipaul, it is the civilization of the 'centre' where people of the 'periphery' like him, may come to fulfill their ambition. So, if one believes (as Said has critiqued in *Orientalism*) that, the civilization of the West is superior, and the civilization of the 'other' is inferior, one is committing a mistake, because, the so-called universal or Western civilization is, in reality, the culmination of the "plundering of the rest of the world" (Nandy, 1999: ix). For Naipaul, that civilization has given him the prompting and the idea of a writing vocation and the means to fulfill his dream; and again, it is the civilization that has enabled him to make the journey from the 'periphery' to the 'centre.'

Roger Garaudy,[30] in the foreword to Ashis Nandy's *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias* (1999), maintains that, "Occident is an accident" (ix). The argument is that, today, what Occident stands for, or, is known for, is the result of the exploitations and plundering of the rest of the world. The 'progress' of the West, therefore, builds upon the exploitation of the rest. In other words, the progress in the West with its application of reason for achieving higher and higher ends at the cost of humanity and destruction of nature has been possible only because it ran blindly after reason, and not wisdom. Such a growth, as Descartes puts it, has made the West 'masters' and possessors of nature. Garaudy has rightly observed that the Western model of 'growth' is characterized by blind production of things, whether useful or useless, including destructive armaments. Such growth in the West, he believes, is possible only by plundering the rest of the world; and it began with the genocide of the American or the Red Indians (of whom Naipaul also refers to), with the trade of the African slaves, and in Asia, colonial conquest, the opium war and the bomb on Hiroshima (Nandy, 1999: ix). In addition, more tragically, in the Middle-East, such 'growth' continued with the race for the possession of oil. Garaudy further observes that, this growth led to the starvation death of fifty-five million human beings in the so-called underdeveloped (often labelled as Third World) countries. He argues that, "'underdevelopment' is not a phenomenon of backwardness; it has been created by the growth of the West" (x). Therefore, the growth in the West that shaped the civilization of the West, or in Naipaul's parlance: the civilization of the 'centre' which he considers as 'universal civilization' which excludes many important and potential civilizations and cultures — more specifically the civilization of Islam, since

[30] Roger Garaudy was born in Marseille in France to Catholic parents who lately converted to Islam. This French philosopher had authored more than fifty books on political philosophy and Marxism. He was a very controversial writer mainly for his *The Founding Myths of Modern Israel* (1996) for which he was heavily fined by the French government.

when, ‘fundamentalism’ has been coined to define Islam and Islamic societies. Even the Western vision of a “universal or good society does not include India except peripherally as an object of study, charity and experimentation” (Nandy, 1999: 5-6). Nandy argues that, all civilizations share some basic values and goodness, and right ethics are not the monopoly of any civilization. He observes that, institutionalized or man-made suffering that exist in the peripheries of the world, euphemistically called the Third World, is the result of the exploitation and oppression (by the wealth-seeking and imperialistic colonizing nations). To him, the concept of the ‘Third world’ is not a cultural category; it is rather a political and economic category, born of poverty, exploitation, indignity and self-contempt (Nandy, 1999: 21-22).

In *Orientalism*, Said has shown how the West considers itself superior and the ‘other’ as inferior. The East or the Orient is seen as a subject (land/race) and must be conquered and owned or possessed. Hence, Said’s *Orientalism* delivers the great dichotomy between the West i.e. the familiar ‘we,’ and the rest or strange and unfamiliar ‘they.’ In the Westerner/Orientalist’s eye, the people of the Orient or the non-West are stereotyped inferior, strange and exotic ‘other’ who, in the words of Karl Marx, “cannot represent themselves; they must be represented” (qtd. in Said, 2001: 335). Many postcolonial critics believe that, Said’s influential book has inaugurated a new kind of study of colonialism. It has also given rise to a series of cultural and critical theories that range from multiculturalism to postcolonialism. Ania Loomba[31] observes in her scholarly work *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2007) that, Said’s argument about the representations of the ‘Orient’ in European literary

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[31] Ania Loomba is Catherine Bryson Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. She researches and teaches early modern literature, histories of race and colonialism, postcolonial studies and feminist theories. She has taught in many universities worldwide including Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Tulsa, University of Illinois, and University of Natal, and was formerly a fellow at Stanford University.

texts, travelogues and other writings, contributed to the creation of a dichotomy between Europe and its 'others':

> . . . a dichotomy that was central to the creation of European culture as well as to the maintenance and extension of European hegemony over other lands. Said's project is to show how 'knowledge' about non-Europeans was part of the process of maintaining power over them . . . (Loomba, 2007: 43)

To borrow Loomba's idea here, it can be said that, with the fall of the mighty Soviet Union, the US has turned out to be the global 'power-plant' and has compelled social scientists and postcolonial critics to reconsider whether colonialism has ever come to an end. The US hegemony, combining with other European allies (as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan war, and recently with the killing of Libyan president Muammar Al Gaddafi by the NATO forces) has shown the world, that, some form of colonialism is still in action. Loomba considers the term 'postcolonial as a contested and complicated one, since, the nature of colonialism and imperialism was not same in the colonized lands. She argues that, the whole world may be called postcolonial because seemingly the age of colonialism is over and the descendents of once colonized peoples live everywhere. Yet, interestingly, since the colonial rule have not been fully erased, it is difficult to proclaim the demise of colonialism. For Loomba, a country may be both postcolonial by formally becoming independent and neo-colonial by remaining economically and culturally dependent at the same time. The importance of formal decolonization cannot be ignored, yet, the unequal relations of colonial rule, which are reinscribed in the contemporary imbalances between 'first' and 'third' world nations, cannot be dismissed either. The new world order may not depend upon direct rule, but, one can see the economic, cultural and political penetration and control of some countries by others (Loomba, 2007: 12).

On the other hand, Said observes that, the global South, which was once referred to romantically and emotionally as the 'Third World' due to its 'debt trap,' problems of poverty, disease, underdevelopment and ethnic conflicts, is not the only region that has seen the US dominance; "in places like Central America, the Middle East and Asia, the United states still remains the dominant power . . ." (Said, 2001: 348). Yet, much before Said, Fanon observes the consequences of colonialism, saying that, it is Europe which is literally responsible for the creation of the Third World. Loomba rightly observes in her book, that, Fanon has made his observation in the sense that, it is material wealth and labour from the colonies, and "the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians and the Yellow races" that have fuelled the "opulence" of Europe (qtd. in Loomba, 2007: 44).

As far as the question of civilization is concerned, Said argues that, the binary opposition between the familiar i.e. the West or 'us' and the unfamiliar i.e. the Orient, the East or 'them' is a European self-conception. It implies that:

> . . . if colonized peoples are irrational, Europeans are rational. Similarly, if the former are barbaric, sensual and lazy, the latter i.e. Europe is civilization itself . . . if the Orient is static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead; the Orient has to be feminine so that Europe can be masculine. (Loomba, 2007: 45)

Such a definition of civilization and barbarism is a Western concept and it rests on an irreconcilable difference between 'we' and 'they,' familiar and the unfamiliar, black or coloured and white, and above all self and the other. Referring to Samuel Huntington's proposition of the 'clash of civilizations,' Said argues that, cultures and civilizations are not water-tight compartments, and modern cultural theory acknowledges that, cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous. Cultures and civilizations are interrelated and interdependent so much so

that, any attempt of singular categorization of culture and civilization is incorrect. He maintains:

> How can one today speak of "Western civilization" except as in large measure an ideological fiction, implying a sort of detached superiority for a handful of values and ideas, none of which has much meaning outside the history of conquest, immigration, travel and the mingling of peoples that gave the Western nations their present mixed identities (Said, 2001: 349).

In *Identity and Violence*, Sen defines the plurality of human identities with regard to culture and civilization. He vehemently rejects the idea of singular categorization of culture and civilization. In the Prologue, Sen argues that the politics of global confrontation is often seen as a 'corollary' of religious and cultural divisions in the world. Hence, the world is increasingly seen, as Sen believes, only implicitly, as a federation of religions or of civilizations, and thereby ignoring all the other ways in which people see and define themselves. Such line of thinking, gives way to the odd presumption that, the people of the world can be uniquely categorized through 'singular partitioning.' Civilizational or religious partitioning of the world population, therefore, as Sen has observed, yields a 'solitarist' approach to human identity. The solitarist approach to human identity may lead to misunderstanding, intolerance and negative stereotyping resulting into cultural and civilizational crises in the world. Sen observes:

> Our shared humanity gets savagely challenged when the manifold divisions in the world are unified into one allegedly dominant system of classification in terms of religion, or community, or culture, or nation, or civilization . . . The hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies to a great extent in a clearer understanding of the pluralities of human identity. (Sen, 2006: xiv)

Huntington's thesis of 'the clash of civilizations' is widely critiqued for its use of imagined singularity and unique categorization of cultures and civilizations of the world. It is argued that, the thesis of a civilizational 'clash' is based on a unique categorization along civilizational lines and special attention is paid on religious divisions. While contrasting Western civilization with Islamic civilization, Hindu civilization, Chinese civilization and so on, Huntington, as Sen argues, has meticulously incorporated religious differences or confrontations for sharper divisiveness. Thus, in partitioning the population of the world, into those belonging to 'the Islamic world,' 'the Western world,' 'the Hindu world,' 'the Buddhist world' etc. the divisive power of the classificatory priority, is implicitly used to place people firmly inside a "unique set of rigid boxes" (Sen, 2006: 10-11).

The idea, that the West is civilization itself (as pointed out by Said) and the often overambitious reference to Western civilization as 'universal civilization,' has been strongly critiqued by many postcolonial critics. As stated before, Nandy maintains that, all civilizations share some common and basic values; goodness and right ethics are not the monopoly of any civilization (Nandy, 1999: 21). Likewise, Sen raises strong objections to Huntington's definitions and his solitarist approach to world civilizations. In describing various civilizations, as mentioned earlier, scholars argue that, Huntington is not free from Western bias, as he projects the Western civilization as unique. However, effort has been made in this study, to discuss Huntington's ideas of civilization in relation to the making of the 'universal civilization.'

Scholars observe that, civilizational analysis does not necessarily flourish within the intellectual circles only, it tends to become a commonplace discussion among the public, particularly, in the West, for invoking 'Western' values against those of the 'others.' Citing the example of the post 9/11 era, Sen points out that, there have been wholesale stereotyping of the Muslims all over the world, and such stereotyping comes ". . . often enough from

people who are no great specialists . . ." (Sen, 2006: 44). Even after many years of the incident of 9/11, Shahrukh Khan, an Indian icon and Bollywood actor was maltreated and detained in an US airport at New Jersey on August 14, 2009, only because his name was 'Khan.'[32] Shahrukh went to the United States for the promotion of his latest film *My Name Is Khan*. It is quite interesting that Khan experiences the same fate which the protagonist of the film experiences.

Civilizational analysis involves issues that need to be treated both intellectually and impartially. Such an intellectual discourse should do away with Western or non-Western bias. Sen has shown how the champions of the 'clash of civilizations' believe in the divisive line of singular categorization, and tend to see tolerance as a special and enduring feature of Western civilization (2006: 49). He rejects the idea that tolerance, liberty and democracy are 'quintessentially' Western. He argues that, tolerance and liberty are certainly among the important achievements of modern Europe, but such values can be seen in other cultures and civilizations as well. Sen's observations, no doubt, have profound truth when one speaks of the ancient Indian civilizations (for example, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa) and the great medieval Islamic civilization. Liberty, democracy and tolerance, the so-called universal and modern values of the West, were at the heart of these civilizations. It is a matter of surprise, that, writers like Naipaul's stature fail to recognize the contributions made by the ancient Indian and the great medieval Islamic civilization in particular, towards science and mathematics. Naipaul, like many other European scholars/writers, considers science, mathematics and values such as goodness and tolerance belong to the West. Sen, however, gives full credit to the ancient Indian and medieval Islamic civilizations for their contributions to science and mathematics. The contributions made by the Indian mathematicians: Aryabhatta, who has graced the scientific world with the evolution of 'zero,'

[32] www.shahrukh.com

Varahamihira and Brahmagupta and the ninth century Arab mathematician Al-Khwarizmi, the founder of 'algorithm' or 'algebra,' are known to all. The epistemology of knowledge and its production, as elaborated and sanctioned by the Western academy as 'Western' is greatly indebted to the non-European world. It is believed that, the origins of much of the Western knowledge, particularly, mathematical and scientific, "came from the Arab world, which is why today even westerners write in Arabic when they write a number" (Young, 2003: 18). Likewise, one can get ample knowledge of the history of modern science, mathematics and other intellectual contributions made by the Indians, Arabs, Chinese and Iranians in the fields of science, mathematics and philosophy to which, European Renaissance and the Enlightenment are greatly indebted to (Sen, 2006: 56).

II

At this point, it is worthwhile to come to the core point of discussion in this chapter: the making of a universal civilization. The preceding analysis will help to negotiate whether the civilization of the West can be termed as 'universal civilization.' Naipaul, however, expresses his indebtedness to the civilization of the West or in his own words, the civilization of the 'centre' which has given him the prompting for a writing vocation. As stated in the opening lines of this chapter, Naipaul advocates for the Western civilization, and it is evident from his Manhattan speech, delivered in October, 1990. He defines this rather contested term 'universal civilization' in the light of the civilization of the West and in connection with the non-Arab Muslim world.

Naipaul's definition of the 'universal civilization' however, is said to have developed from his personal experiences which he also describes in a 'personal' way:

> It is the civilization, first of all, which gave me the idea of the writing vocation. It is the civilization in which I have been able to practise my vocation as a writer . . . I always recognized, in England in the 1950s, that as someone with a writing vocation there was nowhere else for me to go. And if I have to describe the universal civilization I would say that it is the civilization that both gave me the prompting and the idea of the literary vocation; and also gave the means to fulfil that prompting; the civilization that enabled me to make that journey from the periphery to the centre. (TWW, 2003: 504-7)

His formulation of the universal civilization, however, is based on certain assumptions relating to the non-Arab Muslim world. Yet, one cannot miss to find out in those assumptions, the elements of Eurocentric bias. He has tried to perceive the non-Arab Muslims and their culture from the perspective of Europe and its standards by drawing the contrast that the people in those countries need the West's goods and its scientific inventions and yet its values are rejected. Has he drawn the contrast between the West and its values to that of the so-called 'imperialist' Islam with its 'fundamentalist' adherents in terms of divisive civilizational lines like Huntington? He claims that he formulated the idea of the 'universal civilization' during his journey to the four non-Arab Muslim nations — Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia. His travel to these countries is carried, as he says, mainly to understand the cause of the Muslim 'rage.' But, doubt remains whether Naipaul is really able to understand the non-Arab Muslim societies and their alleged 'rage' against others, particularly the West. On Naipaul's hurricane visits to the non-Arab Muslim world and his meticulously chosen places for visit and peoples for interview, Fouad Ajami in his review of *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples*, also considers that, as an outsider, Naipaul could not go much beyond the "exterior of things" (Ajami, 1981). In fact, Naipaul is in hurry, he wants "to see Islam in action" (AB, 2003: 119); he wants "to know

about the Islamization of institutions" and "to find about the application of Islam to institutions, to government, to law" (AB, 2003: 129). Thus, meeting a few chosen people and by recording or managing their views, as a 'manager' of stories, and without making an attempt to know Islam and its history thoroughly, especially in the non-Arab Muslim world, one cannot really go deep and give proper judgment.

While in Iran in 1979, at the time of the Islamic revolution, Naipaul gets disturbed with the term 'revival of Islam.' He finds the term to be a 'puzzle' and wished that the people and the papers could instead use the term 'fundamentalism.' So, 'fundamentalism' was a term which was then only used by the Westerners to define the 'resurgence' of Islam in the Muslim world. Their interpretation of the word 'fundamentalism' was not only to mean the religious revivalism or resurgence that swept across the Muslim world during the late seventies and eighties but also to mean the (so-called) fanaticism, intolerance and rejection of the West in Islamic societies such as Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Moreover, on meeting Syed, a young medical student of twenty-three and the son of a doctor in Rawalpindi in Pakistan in *Among the Believers*, who happened to be a Shia Muslim and his father's identifying of him as a 'rationalist,' Naipaul discovers in him, in the words of Lillian Feder[33], a kind of "fusion of the 'worldly' aspects of the Shia Muslim religion in which he was raised and his attraction to the West which, … 'leads' in the values and accomplishments that [the concept of the universal civilization] encapsulates" (Feder, 2001: 14). He is unlike his other friends in the medical school who just wanted to pass the examinations to become doctors. They are not interested in intellectual matters as Syed is; they just wanted the skill but are not interested in the civilization that goes with the skill. Naipaul observes that it is due to his father's medical background, his English reading and

[33] Lillian Feder is Professor Emireta of English, Classics and Comparative Literature at City University, New York.

his short stay in England that has put Syed in an advantageous position. The doctor, being proud of his son's 'rationalism' and his own strength derived from his faith as a follower of Ali, however, gives a rational definition of *jihad* or holy war. He speaks not the holy war the 'mullahs' speak about, but the holy war he has in mind, is "the constant struggle in yourself to fight evil" (AB, 2003: 197). Naipaul bluntly discovers the depth of Shia and Muslim religious attitude that has been bred into the doctor's son, a 'rationalist' and an outward looking young man when he says: "No religion is more worldly than Islam. In spite of its political incapacity, no religion keeps men's eyes more fixed on the way the world is run" (AB, 2003: 205). In the poetry of this young medical student, in his 'fumbling' response to the universal civilization and in his concerns for the 'basics,' Naipaul has this thought:

> … I thought I could see how Islamic fervour could become creative, revolutionary, and take men on to a humanism beyond religious doctrine: a true renaissance, open to the new and enriched by it, as the Muslims in their early days of glory had been. (AB, 2003: 205)

So, Naipaul finds a contrast between the humanism that is inherent in Islam (the early days of Islam) and the present day 'worldly' Islam tainted with 'fundamentalism.' Now, if Naipaul perceives Islam's inherent 'humanism,' then is it not contradictory on his part to object to its adherents' wish to go "back and back, to the seventh century, to the time of the Prophet?" (BB, 2005: 269). One can say that the early days of Islam was not stigmatized with the so-called 'fundamentalism' and 'worldliness' nor was it tainted (as Maudoodi considers the present day Islam, especially in the subcontinent). Again, while visiting the holy city of Qom in Iran, Naipaul comes to see the remnants of the "great medieval Muslim world, the great universal civilization of the time" (AB, 2003: 59). Thus, Naipaul's accepting the great medieval Muslim world as the great 'universal civilization' of the time and his rejection of

the present day 'imperialist' Islam which is allegedly connected with 'fundamentalism' and 'colonization,' sounds to be contradictory.

As quoted before, during his visit to the non-Arab Muslim world, after his meeting with the open-minded doctor and his son in particular, whose concern for 'basics' and his religious fervour, Naipaul had thought that he could see how Islamic fervour could become creative, revolutionary and how it could take men on to humanism beyond religious doctrine. Moreover, it could become a true renaissance, open to the new and enriched by it like the Muslims of their early days of glory. So, naturally a question comes to the readers' mind: what is wrong with the Islam (of the non-Arab Muslim world) as perceived by Naipaul? There is however, no demarcation or difference between the early Islam and the present day Islam, as far as Islam's holy book, *The Holy Qura'n* and the teachings of the Prophet, *Hadith* are concerned. Islam does not change since its Holy Book can never change; it is unchanging and universal. Islam, as stated earlier in the words of Mr. Mirza of Pakistan in *Among the Believers*, is a 'complete way of life' and it is the same Islam which happened to be in early days of glory. The point here is that 'fundamentalism' is a word which is currently interpreted in a wrong way and is unfortunately linked with Islam only. Fundamentalism, in fact, originally started as a Conservative Protestant movement in the US in the 1920s, which believed in the strict and literal interpretation of the Bible as defined in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (1910–15), a series of 12 pamphlets what are believed to be the absolutely fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Fundamentalism, thus, means the strict compliance or maintenance of fundamentals of any religious doctrine or ideology.

Lillian Feder, however, in her search for Naipaul's 'truth,' observes in her book *Naipaul's Truth: The Making of a Writer* (2001), that the contrast between the 'humanism' Naipaul perceives as inherent in Islam's past and its present "funda-mentalism" allied with an essential "worldliness," she believes, undoubtedly enters into his (Naipaul's) formulation

of the 'universal civilization' as — neither a unitary system of values nor a single concept of truth (14). In other words, Naipaul's idea of a 'universal civilization' in his own words, is an "immense human idea" that fits all men for the "pursuit of happiness" and "cannot be reduced to a fixed system" (TWW, 2003: 517). Whereas, Feder shares Naipaul's cogent encounters with "the colonizations that had come with the Arab faith" (TWW, 2003: 508) or the loss of — cultural traditions and of history prior to Islam in the non-Arab countries where identities are considered to be shaped and determined by an 'imposed' religion; efforts have been made in the present study to show that, identity is not always fixed, it is fluid and always in the process of making. Feder's meticulous hyphenization of the term 'fundamentalism' as 'funda-mentalism' in relation to the present day Islam in the non-Arab Muslim world, seems to bear a different and yet, an interesting connotation. Naipaul's concern and anxiety over Islam's growth in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia where 'fundamentalism' as he believes, is strengthening its root like Iran and Pakistan, is quite obvious. But, one cannot fail to understand the author's anxiety over the *funda* (play) of *mentalism* discovered in Imaduddin's 'mental training' at Bandung Institute of Technology and elsewhere.

Imaduddin's mentral training during 1979 at a time of Islamic revival, is meant for the college and university students mainly adolescent groups who were newly converted and could be turned into 'devout' Muslims. Interestingly, since Imaduddin is an Islamic missionary, besides being a lecturer in Engineering at Bandung Institute of Technology, and also runs the Association of Muslim Intellectuals in Indonesia, he makes frequent visits to the US, Germany and other Western nations with his mental training programs for the overseas students. Moreover, he has a friend called Fazel-Ur-Rehman, the Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago, who believes in the "Koran and Sunna" and has a strong belief that "only Koran can answer modern questions" and besides this, "Malay-speaking Muslims

will lead the revival of Islam in the twenty-first century" (BB, 2005: 23). So, Naipaul discovers Imaduddin as the 'man of the moment' to lead the revival. He expresses his concern and disapproval of such Islamic missionary people's "protected goings and comings" (BB, 2003: 23) in the alien land, particularly the West. Edward Said has rightly designated Naipaul as a 'witness' to Western prosecution. Naipaul, therefore, is not ready to accept the West's 'other' (the converted non-Arabs) to encroach upon the land of his cherished civilization.

Yet, Feder may fail to diagnose any ambiguity or contradiction regarding Naipaul's assessment of the non-Arab Muslim societies and the latter's idea of a 'universal civilization' as a pathological solution to civilizational confusion(s), cultural contests and the formations of individual potential and identity. She also acknowledges Naipaul's observations of the ways in which colonialism "distorts the identity of the subject people" (qtd. in Feder, 2001: 43) not only in the Caribbean countries but also in the non-Arab Muslim societies including India with a vast Muslim population, where, in addition to European colonialism, the Arab Islamic 'imperialism' is said to have shattered the past and identity of the converted people. However, the so-called converted people of the non-Arab countries have no problem with their identity, nor have they erased their past and suffer identity crisis, as Naipaul considers. As stated before, culture and identity are no static phenomena. Change is a natural process, so does history. So, converted people too are part of the history and it is natural that they have accommodated themselves with the new faith and the culture it brought. Religion or faith can never be imposed. The conversions in almost all parts of the non-Arab Muslim world, was voluntary. A person's religion is only one among many other affiliations a person simultaneously subscribes to and perhaps it will be wrong to consider that the converted people's identity has been shattered by an 'imposed' religion. Thus, it can be said that in the non-Arab Muslim world, whatever crises of identity and existence prevail in any form, have

link with migration; regional, cultural and economic differences; and most importantly due to political unrest. By displaying the convert's lack of past and identity, Naipaul in fact, has displayed his own lack of past and identity. In his formulation of a 'universal civilization,' his judgment of the non-Arab Muslim societies and his belief in the skill and vocation that go with a particular civilization (i.e. the West), one can understand Naipaul's limitation in judgment of how a particular civilization or a society or a group of religious people can be judged in a few days by meeting or exchanging views with a handful number of people meticulously chosen for his own interest.

Naipaul's journalistic style of gathering information based on meticulously and at times randomly chosen people for interview and his categorization of people based on mere surface level observations and pre-formed hypothesis, have been critiqued by G. Marudhan in a review of *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples*, which appeared in the *Critique* magazine in March, 2004. Marudhan observes that the book is not entirely unbiased as Naipaul is preoccupied with "anti-Islamic thoughts" that can "mislead the wider non-Islamic readership into the belief that Islam is a backward religion, that Islam advocates terrorism and religious fanaticism, that Islamic peoples are averse to progress and lead miserable lives, that they have no forethought, that they are incapable of competing with the rest of the world" (Marudhan, 2004). He further observes that Naipaul's narration is pretentious as he has judged the converted people and the landscapes according to the standards of the West. Marudhan finds no logic behind Naipaul's categorization of people based on random sampling since people can neither be categorized nor their behaviour be fully predicted. He rightly opines that to discover the reality of the Islamic societies hidden behind the "perfectly misunderstood" *purdah*, one needs to be willing to travel beyond one's accumulated beliefs. Surely then, one may "witness dejected and innocent peoples, struggling

to tear from their past, yearning sincerely to embrace an unrealized dream — peace" (Marudhan, 2004).

Lillian Feder has made an attempt to generalize the nature and impact of colonialism over the colonized lands, be it the Caribbean or the non-Arab Islamic nations and the subcontinent. She, however, fails to recognize the fact that the nature of colonial rule and its impact on colonized lands and people had not been uniform. For example, the nature and impact of colonialism in Africa and the Caribbean are not same to that of South Asia and especially the Indian subcontinent. The identity of the migrant people in Africa, the Caribbean, the subcontinent (especially with the partition) and even in the metropolitan centers of the world where people from the former colonies and the peripheries, have migrated, may experience somewhat similar crisis due to migration and assimilation. But it might be wrong to say that the non-Arab Muslims experience the same loss/crisis of identity due to the "colonization that had come with the Arab faith" (TWW, 2003: 508). As discussed before, the believers' 'faith' in the non-Arab Muslim world is not to be seen as a responsible factor in connection with their identity and existence. Therefore, whatever unrest and turmoil exist in those non-Arab Muslim countries as stated before, have political, regional and migratory connections.

Pakistan, for example, is an exception. It is a politically disturbed state since it was founded on the politics of power. Some scholars (including Naipaul), however, argue that it suffered due to the defective ideological vision of its founders (mainly Sir Mohammad Iqbal) as they had combined religion with politics. For example, Iqbal had this belief that Islam is not only an ethical ideal, it is also "a certain kind of polity" (AB 2003: 101). As shown earlier in this study that, Pakistan, for Jinnah and the Muslim League, was a political demand, religion was merely co-incidental. Jinnah was neither religious nor communal. He

was basically secular and due to this, Gopal Krishna Gokhale[34] once regarded him as an "ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity" (qtd. on the endcover of Singh, 2009). Naipaul was told by the cab driver in Karachi during his first visit in 1979, that the "founder of Pakistan" lived just three months after the founding of the state. "If Jinnah had lived," he said, "it would have been different in Pakistan" (AB, 2003: 111). Naipaul too recognizes Jinnah's secular visions and ambitions. The people of Pakistan, he says, "forgot the secular ambitions of Mr. Jinnah, the state's political founder, who . . . wanted only a state where Muslims wouldn't be swamped by non-Muslims" (AB, 2003: 103). Due to the corruption and intellectual idleness of its people, says Naipaul, Pakistan has turned out to be a "failed" state which, "at the beginning had been to some like God, had become a criminal enterprise" (BB, 2003: 267). The country is now teeming with the problems of religious extremism and terrorism. Thus, instead of upholding the 'faith,' their (those who are involved in extremist and terrorist acts) activities bear the testimony that they are not only tarnishing the image of Islam but also have put the identity of the 'converted' people in question.

III

Francis Fukuyama[35], in his scholarly work *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), however, argues in support of the universal claims of the Western civilization that the liberal democracy of the civilization of the West has put an end of the confrontation of ideologies especially in the post-Cold War period and has become a universally acceptable

[34] Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a prominent social and political thinker who took a pioneering role in India's freedom struggle. As a leader of the Indian National Congress, he was moderate in his views.

[35] Yoshihiro Francis Fukuyama is a Chicago born Japanese-American scholar, political scientist and writer who has drawn the attention of the intellectual community of the world for his widely known book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992).

concept. He maintains that with the advent of the Western liberal democracy, the world has witnessed not just the end of the Cold War but the end of history that means the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government which will finally lead to the establishment of a universal and homogeneous state. Samuel Huntington, on the other hand, challenges Fukuyama's idea and says that the Western civilization cannot become universal because the main confrontation in the world in the 21st century is now shifting from ideological to civilizational where each civilization has its distinct entity. He argues that no civilization wants to be influenced by others and since Western civilization is just one of the world's major civilizations, it is unlikely to become a universal civilization. Defending the Western interests, Huntington says, "The survival of the West depends on Americans reaffirming their Western identity and Westerners accepting their civilization as unique not universal and uniting to renew and preserve it against challenges from non-Western societies" (Huntington, 1996: 20-21).

It is observed that, in the post-Cold War period, there has been drastic change in the world politics which is shaped according to civilizational and cultural lines. Most importantly, people's identities are redefined as culture and cultural identities have become central point of importance to the people of the globe. As people seek new identities or reinvent new ethnicities, there is every chance of generating new enemies and "the potentially most dangerous enemies occur across the fault lines between the world's major civilizations" (Huntington, 1996: 20). Huntington argues that the global politics, in the post-Cold War world, has become 'multipolar' and 'multicivilizational' and the most significant distinctions or differences among peoples are "not ideological, political, or economic … They are cultural" (Huntington, 1996: 21). People try to define themselves and their identity in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, traditions and institutions.

For example, Naipaul constantly looks back to his Indian ancestry and Hindu (Brahmin) religious background; he is said to be constantly haunted by his past, more specifically, his family's indenture background in the Caribbean island with limited opportunities that has compelled him to make his journey from the 'periphery' to the 'centre.' Even in metropolitan England, the centre of his cherished civilization, he is not free from the traumas of alienation, homelessness and identity crisis.

The central argument in Huntington's book is that: global politics is both multipolar and multicivilizational; and on the other hand, modernization is said to be distinct from Westernization and both the terms cannot be applied in a synonymous way. As non-Western societies, he argues, may try to modernize themselves with new technologies, tools and machineries, industrialization etc. they, at the same time, may not necessarily become Western. Moreover, there is a trend among the Westerners to identify their civilization as universal, and therefore, "the West's universalist pretensions increasingly brings into conflict with other civilizations" (Huntington, 1996: 20). Huntington's thesis may at times, seem to be resting on solitarist approach to define human identity and civilization, yet it cannot be denied that there are differences in opinions, values, conceptions, institutions and practices among the people belonging to different civilizations.

The term 'universal civilization' has proliferated extensive debates and discussions throughout the contemporary world, as whether such a uniform and harmonious civilization that will reflect common culture, values, ideals and beliefs, is possible at all. The civilization which will be considered as universal must be founded on general consensus of the people from different cultures, ethnic groups, religions and civilizations who share certain basic values, ideas, practices and beliefs. In Huntington's words, the term 'universal civilization' generally implies "the cultural coming together of humanity and the increasing acceptance of

common values, beliefs, orientations, practices, and institutions by peoples throughout the world" (Huntington, 1996: 56).

The making of a 'universal civilization' is not that easy if one follows Naipaulian concept of the term. It demands subordination or elimination of ethnic and indigenous cultures and societies; it tends to make peripheral civilizations and cultures other than the West, subordinate and subservient. Naipaul inherits a kind of Conradian dark vision of life, and designates the peripheral societies and cultures as 'half-made' societies which are devoid of civilization but full of barbarity. They are the 'bush' societies full of ruins of a dead and departed civilization, the societies with overgrown 'bush.' In an interview with Elizabeth Hardwick published in the 13th May 1979 issue of the *New York Times Book Review*, Naipaul shares his experiences in Africa:

> I saw there a rich town abandoned by Belgians. Street lamps rusty, sand everywhere, collapsed verandas. The Africans were camping in the houses, just the way the ancient English camped in the abandoned villas of the Romans. Here again in Africa one was back in the 5th century. Native people camping in the ruins of civilization. You could see the bush creeping back as you stood there . . . (Jussawalla, 1997: 46-47)

The 'bush' is a common word for Naipaul which stands as a metaphor for backwardness and barbarity, and for him, a characteristic feature of the non-Western societies often labeled as 'Third World.' In another interview published in *The Listener*, 23rd June 1983, Naipaul tells Bernard Levin, that, his birth in tropical Trinidad was a 'mistake' which he realizes at an early age and from where he just wanted to go to a 'prettier' place. He felt that he was put in a 'wrong place.' He was not happy to grow up in an extended family with numerous people and children crawling everywhere, that led to his distaste for family life and his vow never to have children of his own. He has, indeed, no children of his own.

Again, in that family, he developed “a fantasy . . . of civilization as something existing away from this area of barbarity . . . the barbarity of my family and the barbarity outside” (in Jussawalla, 1997: 93). Naipaul also makes a contrast between ‘civilization’ and ‘bush’ in his two great African novels: *In a Free State* (1971) and *A Bend in the River* (1979). Both the novels present a bleak and ‘bush’ Africa where, civilization, represented by the European administrators and expatriates, is restricted in the capitol which is protected and untouched by the surrounding “bush villages” (IFS, 2002: 100) and where “nothing has ever happened” (IFS, 2002: 140). On the other hand, Nazruddin, a migrant trader in *A Bend in the River*, after being frustrated with the disorder and uncertainty of life and existence in the interior of Africa, considers everything void and meaningless including his property. “This isn’t property. This is just bush. This has always been bush” (ABR, 2002: 26).

Language and religion are the main features of any culture and civilization. It is perhaps, not possible for the emergence of a ‘universal civilization’ observes Huntington, to locate a universal language or a universal religion. Language plays an important role in the society or culture. A particular language is the cultural indicator or identity of that particular culture or society. Hence, language can never be suppressed. For example, Bangladesh came into existence in the world map only because of its linguistic difference from the people of West Pakistan in spite of its people’s sharing more or less the same religion. Similarly, after decolonization, the independent societies (among former colonies) have tried to promote their indigenous languages and suppress the language(s) of the empire to assert and define their own culture and identity.

As it is difficult to formulate either a universal language or a universal religion, for the making of a universal civilization, it can be argued that no language in the world can claim the status of universality. Similarly, the dream of a universal religion is also quite unlikely since the contemporary world has seen a ‘resurgence’ of religions throughout the

world which has involved the "intensification of religious consciousness" and the "rise of fundamentalist movements" (Huntington, 1996: 64). It is rightly observed by Huntington, that, resurgence of religions in the late twentieth century, took place in all major religions of the world: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zionism etc. which "involved people returning to, reinvigorating and giving new meaning to the traditional religions of their communities" (Huntington, 1996: 96). It is believed that, religious revivalism go hand in hand with modernism or modernization. But, the problem is that, as modernization is generally being connected to the West or the civilization of the West, it is argued that the expansion of the West has promoted both modernization and Westernization of non-Western societies.

Islamic societies have accepted modernization to a large extent, but they rejected being Westernized, in the sense that, they reject the culture and practices of the West. In order to preserve their own culture, religion and identity, the non-Western societies and the Islamic society in particular, have not only rejected the Western culture but also resisted its cultural dominance. Modern Turkey, observes Huntington, is an exception. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk had made tremendous effort to both modernize and Westernize Turkey by rejecting its Islamic past. But, sadly, in Huntington's phrase, Turkey could only become a "torn country" (Huntington, 1996: 74) since it could neither become wholly Western nor could remain traditionally pure Islamic. It is, thus, in the state of 'in-between.'

Modernization, in fact, is not Westernization. The argument is, while non-Western societies strive for revitalizing their own indigenous cultures and religions, they, at the same time "do not hesitate to use modern techniques of e-mail, cassettes, and television to promote their cause" (Huntington, 1996: 78). While, the non-Western societies become modernized, they, at the same time do not necessarily abandon their own cultures, nor, they adopt the values, practices and institutions of the West. Thus, it has been rightly observed (by

Huntington), that, indigenization had been a kind of resurgence of the non-Western societies or cultures that especially got momentum during the 70s and 80s which promoted local or indigenous cultures and resisted the cultures and practices of the West or the civilization of the West. The non-Arab Muslim world is no exception. Indigenization and revival of religions are said to be crucial global phenomena particularly in the non-Western societies that challenge the Western dominance. As religion provides people with meaning and "a sense of identity and "direction in life"" (Hassan al-Turabi,[36] 1992), people in non-Western societies strive to (re)discover or (re)create their identities. The Muslims in the non-Arab world, thus, find a meaning and a sense of identity in the religion of Islam even though it is, in Naipaul's phrase, an 'imported' faith or a migrant religion that originated in the Arab land. Scholars observe that due to its religious revival, Islam has been one of the most influential and dynamic civilizations in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Moreover, due to its religious and cultural assertiveness, its challenge to the Western hegemony together with the rejection of Western values and institutions, Islam is seen today as one of the "challenger civilizations" (Huntington, 1996: 102) like Chinese, Japanese and Buddhist civilizations. Yet, Islamic revivalism, in the true sense, does not mean fanaticism, intolerance or hostility towards other religions, cultures or civilizations. Resurgence or revival of Islam, actually mean purification. In other words, it is a purification of the self through strict observance of the teachings of Islam as is seen in Imaduddin's mental training; and also, restoration of the 'old glory,' in Naipaul's phrase, or in other words, the restoration of the glory of the seventh century or medieval Islam, the great universal civilization of the time.

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[36] Hassan Abdullah al-Turabi, popularly known as Hassan al-Turabi is a distinguished religious and political leader in Sudan. He is a progressive Islamist leader who not only believes in the *Sharia* (Islamic) law but also believes in democracy, liberty, art, music, unity among Muslims and above all, the rights of women. He is a controversial figure in Sudan and has been imprisoned several times.

Islamic resurgence is, therefore, not unlike the European Renaissance or Reformation, and it has a great impact on Islamic societies. For the people who favour this resurgence, it gives a solution to the problems of the society: the problems of morality, of faith, meaning and identity. Naipaul and even other Western scholars argue that while Islamic resurgence in the countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan, is said to have given people meaning and identity since Islam is seen as a 'solution,' it cannot, however, deal with economic and political problems. The disillusionment and unrest that exist in the Islamic societies especially in the non-Arab Muslim world, Naipaul blames political Islam for its failures especially in Pakistan. While, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that Islamic revival even takes strong roots in Malaysian and Indonesian societies and quite parallel to that, they have achieved great economic progress and political stability. Pakistan, however, is an exception. The country, as mentioned before, is teemed with the problems of regional, ethnic and migrant issues and conflicts and lately with religious extremism and terrorism. Unfortunately, terrorism has become the most challenging global issue today and it is a severe threat to the emerging civilizations of the world.

Moreover, as religion provides meaning and direction in life, the educated modernist elites of the non-Western societies however, do not find any problem with modernity or modernization of societies. For them, modernity and religious revival go hand in hand. It is often argued that revival of non-Western religions or indigenization of non-Western societies are the manifestations of 'anti-Westernism' in the non-West. Thus, revivalism happens to be, in Huntington's words, "not a rejection of modernity; it is a rejection of the West" (Huntington, 1996: 101).

Although, Naipaul pinpoints Islamic revivalism or resurgence in the non-Arab Muslim world as a vehicle for asserting their identities and also to counter the West's cultural dominance, he, at the same time, criticizes their leanings towards modernity and their use of

modern equipments and technology and their alleged contempt for the West. For example, he is surprised to see the frenzy of the Iranian people in Teheran, with their motor vehicles and especially the cab drivers' use of car stereo for listening to 'Koranic' recitations. The Islamization of modernity in the Muslim world especially in the non-Arab world, has also captured the attention of Huntington who discusses the issue within the broad spectrum: the Resurgence of Islam. The way, the 'resurgence' of Islam or re-Islamization affected Muslim societies, similarly, 'Hinduization' affected Indian society just as 'Confucianism' affected the societies in East Asia (Huntington, 1996: 94). Though modernity or modern equipments, due to 'resurgence' of religion(s), not only tend to get Islamized in the Islamic societies, likewise, they get Hinduized, Confucianized, Christianized or Zionized too. Indigenization and resurgence of religion(s) in non-Western societies, therefore, are in a way, a kind of resistance to the Western culture and civilization as well as, empowering indigenous cultures and societies of the non-West.

As discussed earlier, that, identities are fluid and flexible and subject to change with socio-cultural change. Huntington, however, makes a strong argument in this regard saying that, as people cannot live by reason alone, they cannot calculate and act rationally in pursuit of their self-interest until they define their self. Hence, interest in one's own self, predetermines one's identity. The social, economic, and cultural modernization that swept across the world in the second half of the twentieth century, in a way, led to global religious resurgence and as a consequence, long-standing sources of identity and systems of authority have been disrupted (Huntington, 1996: 97). There have been movement of people from one place to another in search for food, job or security; often large-scale migration from villages to the cities took place. Such intra-territorial or interterritorial migrations often led to people's suffering from the trauma of separation from their roots or origins; they become strangers in alien environments and in this way, their identities needed to be redefined or

recreated. Due to rapid social and cultural change, established set of identities often get dissolved and the self needs to be redefined and new identities need to be created. Thus, people face the need to determine their identity: "who am I? Where do I belong?" At this juncture, "religion provides compelling answers" (Huntington, 1996: 97) to these crucial questions, as religious groups help to provide small social communities to fill up that loss or damage caused by migration on the one hand and the sense of insecurity arising out of that, including rapid socio-cultural and spatial change. For example, religion and its rituals provide the transplanted Indian migrant community in the Caribbean, a sense of identity and a sense of community in the midst of their non-belongingness to the outside world. Likewise, the Muslim 'converts' in the non-Arab Islamic societies in Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan including the subcontinent, try to assert their identity and belongingness not only through their culture, language, and ethnicity, but also through the brotherhood of Islam, called *Ummah*, the community of believers who believe in the sovereignty of Allah and the teachings of the Prophet, and unity of Islam. Western scholars see *Ummah* as a pan-Islamic term which discourages Western model of nation state(s), and instead, it strives to bring all Islamic states under one banner, one identity, *Ummah*. Again, the concept of *Ummah* is seen as an Islamist fundamentalist revolutionary movement that rejects the nation state in favour of the unity of Islam (Huntington, 1996: 175). But, Islamic brotherhood or the *Ummah*, in fact, is not against the concept of nation state since Islam teaches its followers to love their motherland as it is a part of their *Imaan* (faith). As Muslims are living in many countries throughout the globe and across the major continents, their motherlands are undoubtedly the nation states where they geographically belong. Again, if one sees it in the model of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community,' then, it might be true that all Muslims of the globe are one community and hence, one nation. This can equally be applied to the Christians, the Jews etc. It cannot, however, be denied that Islam is a great religion and the depth of its

civilization has universal claims, just as Naipaul acknowledges it as a great universal civilization of the medieval time.

A civilization is often judged according to its power relations with other cultures and societies. So, the "distribution of cultures in the world reflects the distribution of power . . . Throughout history the expansion of the power of a civilization has usually occurred simultaneously with the flowering of its culture" and expansion of its "values, practices and institutions to other societies" by its using of that power (Huntington, 1996: 91). As the European colonialism comes to an end, so as the American hegemony is questioned and resisted globally in today's world. Therefore, neither Western Europe, nor North America, can claim for the universal civilization, as neither of them has universal and global acceptance both in terms of culture and power. It is, therefore, understood that a "universal civilization requires universal power" (Huntington, 1996: 91) and hence, it is difficult to formulate a universal civilization in Naipaulian model.

Naipaul underlines Islamic 'fundamentalism' as the root cause of unrest in Islamic societies particularly in the non-Arab Muslim world. Non-Arab people are culturally and linguistically diverse and it is quite natural that they will also have diverse and yet distinct identities. Naipaul undermines such pluralities, and as a result of his sweeping generalization, these people are labelled as mere converts. For him, religious and cultural plurality is "a fundamentalist fantasy" (BB, 2005: 66). "The cruelty of Islamic fundamentalism" he says, "is that it allows only one people — the Arabs, the original people of the Prophet — a past, and sacred places, pilgrimages and earth reverences. These sacred places have to be the sacred places of all the converted peoples [who] have to strip themselves of their past" and "of converted peoples nothing is required but the purest faith . . . Islam, submission. It is the most uncompromising kind of imperialism" (BB, 2005: 72). It can be argued that, religious 'sacred' places have their unique importance and it can be applied to all religions. For

example — the way Jerusalem is important for all Christians and Jews of the world; the Golden Temple of Amritsar for all Sikhs; Jagannath Puri, Kashi, Mathura, Gaya, Benares etc. for the Hindus; likewise, *Makkah* (Mecca) and *Madina* (Medina), are equally important for the Muslims all over the world irrespective of being an Arab or a non-Arab. Then, how the non-Arab Muslims become different as far as the religious sacred places are concerned? Lack of a religious sacred place for Indian migrants in Trinidad and their longing for such places, is Naipaul and his community's own problem. For example in *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), Ganesh Ramsumair, a Brahmin boy with a shaven head and a little saffron bundle under his arms, pretends to go to Benares for study and to become a pundit. As he seriously starts walking, another boy, his friend, has to make him realize the reality, saying, "Stop behaving stupid . . . You think you really going to Benares? That is in India, you know, and this is Trinidad." (2002: 11)

The revival or resurgence of Islam, however, has been a key issue in the postcolonial Islamic world as it gives meaning and identity to its people. Again, as stated before, fundamentalism is a contested term which designates various layers of meanings and cannot be synonymous with intolerant extremism or terrorism. The term 'Islamic fundamentalism' however, is not a very old issue. It is a recent phenomenon which is applied to Islam and its extremist groups in the fourth quarter of the twentieth century. The Islamic fundamentalists have their own and 'self-styled' interpretation of Islamic scriptures in order to fulfill their ends by deviating from the mainstream Islam and its teachings. Though fundamentalism in its literal sense, argues Maulana Wahiduddin Khan[37] in his scholarly book *Islam Rediscovered* (2002), lays emphasis on the "basic teachings or the fundamentals of Islam,"

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[37] Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a distinguished scholar on Islam. Born in Azamgarh (UP), he has received many national and international awards including Demiurgus International Peace Award, Padma Bhusan, and National Citizen's Award.

but this does not mean that any individual, through his/her purely personal interpretation, legitimize violence or "launch a violent movement [for] establishing these so-called Islamic fundamentals" (132) which eventually generates hatred and violence. It is unfortunate that the self-styled Islamist groups carry out acts of violence in the name of Islam. Such self-styled Islamic fundamentalism, he observes, ultimately becomes an "un-Islamic theory" (138). They misuse Islam in order to achieve their (political) ends often with a dream of establishing an Islamic ideal state where no other can rule but only them. They indulge in violence and transgression (which *The Holy Qura'n* forbids) that brings them directly into conflict with other, especially non-Islamic powers and political set up. In the hands of these fundamentalists or Islamist extremists, the true meaning of *jihad* is getting distorted as it is applied to meet political ends. Nowhere in *The Holy Qura'n*, is the word *jihad* used to mean waging of war (Wahiduddin Khan, 2002: 131-54). The term *jihad* is highly misunderstood or misinterpreted both by the believers and non-believers of Islam. It is not all about what its literal meaning: the phrase 'holy war' indicates. Scholars agree that *jihad* is an utmost struggle in one's self towards the true path of Islam. It is a struggle in one's own for self-purification from all evils. In another sense, *jihad* means the struggle against oppression and injustices that prevail in a society. But, in no way, *jihad* can be taken as waging of war on others, particularly the non-Muslims unless it is for self-defense. *The Holy Qura'n* warns the believers of Islam not to cross the limits: "Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not transgressors" (Picthall, 1988: Part II, verse 190). The holy book of Islam, thus, forbids its followers against any form of transgression. Therefore, the (so-called) *jihad* of the self-styled Islamist extremists is not the true *jihad* prescribed in Islam. Islam prescribes for the *jihad* of the self or the individual to fight the evil in one's own self.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism, however, has complex roots and should be dealt with historical perspective. With the fall of the two great Islamic empires in the world: the Ottoman empire in the extremity of Europe and the Mughal empire in the eastern hemisphere, the Muslims, especially those who were craving for an Islamic state in the world, came into direct conflict with the growing power of the modern West and its civilization. They suffered from a kind of "defeatist mentality" (Wahiduddin Khan, 2002: 151) and thereby emerged a militant group among the Muslims who wanted political gain by adopting violent and extremist actions. Such political view of Islam is wrong and those who spread such misguided interpretations among the Muslims forgot that Islam is never a system of state or a polity. Moreover, prior to its fall, the Soviet Union as a superpower, was a continuing threat to the other superpower, the USA. Thus, at the later stage of the Cold-war, the USA adopted various strategies to disrupt and disintegrate his arch rival. It began funding those militant groups, the Islamist extremists, especially the Mujahideens (who were referred to as 'freedom fighters' by the US) against the Communist Soviet Union, as communism was treated as an enemy of Islam. The occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet Russia added fuel to the flames and as a result, the USA, by playing off with the Mujahideens, supplied its money and weapons to them in order to oust the communist regimes both in Afghanistan and Soviet Russia. The mighty Soviet Union ultimately falls, but unfortunately for the USA, it proved counter-productive which replaced one enemy with the other, and that also its own creation. It is said that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda are the creations of the United States and like Frankenstein's monster[s],"[38] have weighed heavily on the US and its policy so far.

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[38] Princy James, "Osama: A Frankeinstein's Monster Created by the US," *The Water Cooler*, Sunday, May 8, 2011.<http://in.news.yahoo.com/blogs/thewatercooler/osama-frankenstein-monster-created-us-034810700.html>

The crucial issue raised by Naipaul with regard to the non-Arab Muslim world, is that, while they (the converted people in the non-Arab world) enjoy the benefits of the Western civilization for its technology, education, medicine, scientific inventions etc. they, at the same time, reject the values, culture and institutions of the West. It has been discussed in the beginning of this chapter that the West is not the only contributor to the world with knowledge, technologies and scientific inventions; other civilizations too like the Indian, Chinese and the Arab civilizations have equally contributed in the field of philosophy, science and mathematics during ancient and medieval times. The problem which Naipaul fails to underline is the problem of power. The major cause of the conflict between Islam and the West, according to Huntington, lies in "fundamental questions of power and culture. . . Who is to rule? Who is to be ruled?" (Huntington, 1996: 212). To take Huntington's observation further, it can be said that the crucial cause of conflict between the West and the non-West or between the West and Islam is not over territorial imperialism but cultural and economic imperialism on broad intercivilizational issues such as: human rights, democracy, Western interventions (both political and military) for the control of oil, migration, nuclear proliferation and terrorism in all forms.

The 'clash of civilizations' or the conflict between the West and the non-West, between the West and Islam or 'Islamic fundamentalism,' by whatever terms the scholars may define the contemporary global crises, it is a bare fact that in our multi-civilizational world, one cannot erase civilizational, religious and cultural differences that exist in our global society. Each society, culture or civilization has its own distinct identity, values, customs, practices and institutions. For example, the West defines its culture and identity through its liberalism, scientific and technological developments, democracy, individualism etc. while the non-Western world, the Islamic world in particular, defines its culture and identity through its history, society, civilization and above all through the religion of Islam

which guides its people as a ‘complete way of life’ and with unity, faith and discipline (AB, 2003: 121). Therefore, the crucial issue is not to find fault with other’s culture and civilization but to look for the values, ideas and beliefs, institutions and practices that are in common among all civilizations. It is not the matter of superiority or inferiority of one particular civilization or the other, it is the matter for the search for the commonality and not for universality.

Religious or civilizational antagonism is ultimately, not the solution to the present crises for achieving global harmony. What Huntington terms as the fault-line wars: the two Gulf Wars and the war in Afghanistan between the Western forces and Islamic extremists such as, Al-Qaeda or the Taliban, should not be seen as religious or civilizational wars, or the war between the West and Islam. Al-Qaeda or the Taliban are not the representatives of the whole Muslim community, nor do they have acceptance in the common Muslim mind. Islam does not recommend extremism or intolerance, nor does it recommend killing of innocent people in the name of *jihad* a term extensively misused by the extremist and the so-called Islamist (terrorist) groups. The extremist Islamist groups, and their self-styled leaders, such as Osama Bin Laden (who is recently killed in Pakistan in an operation by the US special forces), have their own ideology which is, in no way, in conformity with Islamic ideology. Violence and extremism has no place in Islam. Unfortunately, the Islamist extremists think that, through their deeds (of violence and hatred), they are upholding the faith. But, in reality, they are defaming Islam. The common Muslims reject the transgressors. In fact, Islam is being stigmatized by a handful of extremist group of Muslims, who are Muslims in name but not in their practices. US president, Barak Obama, in his visit to India in November 7, 2010 at St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai, while answering to a question posed by a student about *jihad* or *jihadi*, said:

> The phrase jihad has a lot of meanings within Islam and is subject to a lot of different interpretations. But I will say that, first, Islam is one of the world's great religions. And more than a billion people who practice Islam, the overwhelming majority view their obligations to their religion as ones that reaffirm peace and justice and fairness and tolerance. I think all of us recognize that this great religion in the hands of a few extremists has been distorted to justify violence towards innocent people that is never justified. And so I think one of the challenges that we face is how do we isolate those who have these distorted notions of religious war and reaffirm those who see faiths of all sorts - whether you are a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian or a Jew or any other religion, or your don't practice a religion - that we can all treat each other with respect and mutual dignity. (Obama[39] 2010)

Besides the above observation of president Obama, it is also generally observed that there is certainly an urgent need to understand the truth and greatness about Islam which cannot be judged only with the acts of a few deviated people. It is unfortunate that, Naipaul, with limited and superficial knowledge of Islam and Islamic societies, has misjudged Islam and its people in his Islamic journey(s) through stereotypical generalization. Therefore, the need of the hour is that, hatred or violence, wars and interventions/aggressions should be replaced by mutual understanding and respect, negotiation and co-operation between different societies, cultures and civilizations which are certainly the preconditions for the making of a universal civilization.

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[39] Excerpt from US President Barak Obama’s interactions with the students at St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai. For more information, visit <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/full-transcript-obamas-town-hall-at-st-xaviers/134615-3.html>

Civilizations are built and gradually crumble to decay. It happened with world's great civilizations: the Roman Empire, the Abbasid Caliphate, the Mughal Empire, and the Ottoman Empire etc. Those societies which assume that their history has ended, however, are usually societies whose history is about to decline (Huntington, 1996: 301). As Huntington challenges Fukuyama's idea of the end of history and the last man, already discussed before, he, however, observes that, history ends at least once and it happens to every civilization. He argues that, as the civilization's universal state emerges, its people become blind with the belief that, theirs is the final form of society (Huntington, 1996: 301). So, the end of history may either mean the end of a civilization, once reached its zenith, or it may mean in the words of Matthew Melko[40]: the end of the possibility of development of other civilizations (Melko, 1969: 155). The West and its civilization, for instance, with its rapid expansion and colonization worldwide, considered its civilization to be the only civilization which has universal appeal and thus defied the existence/importance of all other civilizations.

Almost all major civilizations of the world, may have universal claims, because, most of these civilizations cultivate some basic values in common. However, the Western scholars believe that, the values and institutions of the Western civilization have universal appeal and have the belief that the non-Western cultures and civilizations are inferior and hence, their people should cultivate the values and practices of the West, such as — democracy, human rights, rule of law, individualism etc. and commit themselves to these values in their lives and institutions. Naipaul is no exception in this regard. He is of the view that, while the non-Arab Muslim world enjoy the fruits of other civilization (the West in particular), they, at the same time, reject its values. He writes in *Among the Believers*, that, for the Islamic

[40] Matthew F. Melko was an American political scientist who was famously known for his influential work *The Nature of Civilizations* (1969). He was Professor Emeritus at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, USA.

fundamentalists, faith is one and all, and for them, Islam is a complete way of life. And again:

> The West, or the universal civilization it leads, is emotionally rejected. It undermines; it threatens. But at the same time it is needed, for its machines, goods, medicines, warplanes, the remittances from the emigrants, the hospitals that might have a cure for calcium deficiency, the universities that will provide master's degrees in mass media. All the rejection of the West is contained within the assumption that there will always exist out there a living, creative civilization, oddly neutral, open to all to appeal to. (AB, 2003: 194)

Now, the argument is that, since civilizational universalism is a debatable issue, and has been shown in the preceding pages, that it is difficult to designate a particular civilization whether of the West or the non-West, with the status of a universal civilization, then how can Naipaul presume that the West leads a universal civilization? As already shown before, economic and technological advancement does not necessarily make a civilization, the West, in particular, as 'universal' or superior to other civilizations, since, their advancement or 'growth' is the result of centuries of colonization, subjugation and exploitation of others. Moreover, as he points out that the West or its civilization is emotionally rejected while it is needed for its goods, machines, medicines, warplanes, remittances, including their cure for calcium deficiency. Needless to say that, in the decentered, destabilized, globalized and fragmented postcolonial world, exchange of goods and technologies, and movement of labour and capital is seen to be common and necessary. Naipaul, however, finds it difficult to accept the use of West's goods, machines and medicines (even for calcium deficiency) by other society particularly the Islamic society in the non-Arab world. He has a colonial legacy of both language and sensibility and hence, his Eurocentric mind is not ready to accept the *status quo*. For him, the West or its culture and civilization must rule and be accepted by all.

Moreover, the most important fact is that, as a migrant subject himself and also as a descendent of the indentured ritualistic Hindu migrants from India, Naipaul has his own problems. He is a divided man: one is the writer in him with metropolitan attachment and the other is his peasant Hindu self which was once close to the village ways and ritualized life of his community, even though separated by two or three generations from peasant India. The narrator in *The Enigma of Arrival*, probably Naipaul himself, however, "knew nothing of other communities" and had "only the prejudices of his time, in that colonial, racially mixed setting . . . [and] hated the idea of eating from foreign hands. Yet at the same time he had dreamed of fulfilment in a foreign country" (TEA, 2002: 120). So, the idea of hate and rejection of a foreign country or culture, and the simultaneous need of that country for fulfilment of ambition is an example of double standard, and it is a problem of Naipaul's own. He needs to display that dual standard and hence, he meticulously chooses the non-Arab Muslims, or in his own term, the converted people. The 'rage,' the confusion and the so-called double standard in the ways of his converted people, are in a way, his own.

Naipaul was once asked by a senior fellow of the Manhattan Institute, Myron Magnet, about "Why are certain societies or groups content to enjoy the fruits of progress, while affecting to despise the conditions that promote progress?" In addition, "why is Islam held up in opposition to Western values?" (TWW, 2003: 513-14). To answer these crucial questions, Naipaul invokes the idea of his Polish predecessor, Joseph Conrad, who spotted the Muslim 'anxiety' or 'hysteria' more than hundred years ago, in a 'half-naked, betel-chewing pessimist' on the edge of the virgin forest in tropical Africa. This 'pessimist' is described as "a man angry, powerless, empty-handed, with a cry of bitter discontent ready on his lips" which is compared to a "philosophical shriek" from the depth of a modern day easy chair (qtd. in TWW, 2003; 513). Naipaul's simple answer is "philosophical hysteria" (TWW, 2003: 513, 514). It is a painful fact, that the half-naked man's land is encroached upon and

colonized, its people are enslaved and left ‘powerless’ and yet his anger and bitterness is termed as ‘philosophical hysteria.’ As power determines culture and civilization, the West, as a colonial power, by controlling other societies, cultures and civilizations, has tried to impose its culture, values, institutions and practices over others since it considers its culture and civilization superior to all other cultures and civilizations. Naipaul is nurtured by such Western concept, who considers his own birth-place as mere ‘bush’ like that of Africa, an ‘uncreative,’ and ‘cynical’ land. His ‘converts’ in the non-Arab lands, are also no exception. They are the people, who, he observes, have erased their past and by doing so, have lost their identity. They are seen to be content with their ‘imported’ Arab faith, and have contempt for the culture and values of the West. Though, in his Islamic journey, he discovers unconscious contradiction in people’s attitudes: while at home, in Iran, for example, they reject the West and keep the revolution going, like the newspaper editor; yet, the US is so important for the editor’s son’s ‘future’ or in the Iranian doctor’s renunciation of the West, while he needs the drugs and medical equipments, which are made in that world to keep his hospital going. It can be argued here that, Naipaul has undertaken his journey in the late 70s and early 80s, when the world was becoming globalized with cultural, economic and technological exchanges between various nations and continents. Hence, exchange of consumer goods and even technology is not something uncommon, when everything is getting decentered, starting with decolonization. It is not difficult to pinpoint Naipaul’s error of judgment here; he makes sweeping generalizations and judges everything in Western standard and with Eurocentric bias. That is why the Conradian ‘hysteria’ or ‘philosophical shriek’ has been amplified into ‘fundamentalism’ in his standard of judgment. Thus, it is natural for Naipaul, to feel that, the division or contradiction in the revolutionary editor’s spirit, and the renunciation of the Iranian fictional woman biologist, who puts on the veil on quitting American ways — both contain an unacknowledged tribute to the universal civilization (TWW, 2003: 516).

Naipaul considers that the non-Arab Muslim societies have no such Western value system, and hence, are teemed with anarchy and their resultant 'rage' against the West. Time and again, he blames the faith, in his own words, the 'imported' Arab faith of the believers. The Malay Muslims, he says, wished to be nothing but their "imported Arab faith" that, they would have liked to "make their minds and souls a blank, an emptiness, so that they could be nothing but their faith" (TWW, 2003: 512). Again, in the shut-in Iranian World, he says, "the faith was the complete way, filled everything, left no spare corner of the mind or will or soul, to the other world where it was necessary to be an individual and responsible; where people developed vocations, and were stirred by ambition and achievement, and believed in perfectibility" (TWW, 2003: 514-15). It can be argued that, values such as — responsibility, ambition, achievement and perfectibility, are not the values of the West only, other civilizations and cultures do cultivate such values. Non-Western societies, for instance, Naipaul's non-Arab Muslim society in particular, does not undermine such values. Islam is never against individual interests nor does it oppose individuality. Ambition, achievement, responsibility and perfectibility are the core values in Islam which teaches the Muslims to be responsible citizens of the society with purity and perfectibility in character. Moreover, these are the worldly values which shape a healthy modern society. So, in this way, Naipaul contradicts himself when he says: "No religion is more worldly than Islam . . . no religion keeps men's eyes more fixed on the way the world is run" (AB, 2003: 205).

By way of concluding this chapter, it can be said, that the non-Western societies, especially the Asian and Islamic societies are reluctant to accept the Western dominance by resisting the culture and civilization of the West. It cannot, however, be denied that over the past few centuries, due to colonization, the West has exerted a devastating impact on the non-Western civilizations. Huntington makes a brilliant study in terms of intercivilizational issues, saying that the appeal of the Western culture and civilization is decreasing since the

West's power is declining and the world has become bi-polar: the West and the rest. He argues that the central problem in relations between the West and the rest is the result of the discordance between the West's efforts to promote a universal culture on the one hand and its gradually declining ability to do so (Huntington, 1996: 183). With decolonization and political independence, the non-Western societies have tried to liberate themselves from Western dominance economically, militarily and culturally, and have shown potential both culturally and economically to compete with the West. Consequently, "the universal aspirations of Western civilization, the declining relative power of the West and the increasing cultural assertiveness of other civilizations" have ensured bitter and difficult relations between the West and the non-West (Huntington, 1996: 184). The rise of the non-Western societies, culturally, militarily and economically, and the relative decline of the West, have thus, posed a crucial question before the world community: how a universal civilization can be made or how a universal global consensus can be achieved to shape a harmonious future world?

Almost all the major civilizations of the world, share some key values in common. It is argued that:

> If humans are ever to develop a universal civilization, it will emerge gradually through the exploration and expansion of these commonalities . . . peoples in all civilizations should search for and attempt to expand the values, institutions, and practices they have in common with peoples of other civilizations. (Huntington, 1996: 320)

Therefore, the future of both civilization and world peace, undoubtedly depend upon understanding and cooperation among all civilizations of the world. Our world is a conglomeration of civilizations and hence, efforts should be made to ensure that no particular

civilization should dominate over or encroach into other civilizations since no civilization can claim for universality in this multi-civilizational world.

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CHAPTER – V
CONCLUSION

> India is for me a difficult country. It isn't my home and cannot be my home; yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it . . . I am at once too close and too far.
>
> — IWC, 2002: x

> Nearly all my adult life had been spent in countries where I was a stranger.
>
> — LO, 2004: 16

> . . . what's nationality these days? I myself, I think of myself as a citizen of the world.
>
> — IFS, 2002: 3

In 1950, when he was only eighteen, Naipaul left the West Indian island, Trinidad on a scholarship to Oxford. It was this move that changed the future course of his life — a boy travelling to be a writer, a vocation that he cherished from his very childhood; a boy leaving his family, his background (of indenture), his past and his roots. He was travelling, in his own words, from the 'periphery' to the 'centre.' His departure from colonial Trinidad and his arrival to metropolitan England, considered to be the 'centre,' thus, have an everlasting effect in his life. His life has since then, become a story of a series of journeys, of arrivals and departures. It has become an unending journey to locate and identify himself with the worlds around him. In this process, his journey takes him back to the Caribbean, after a decade of his departure, while the land of Calypso ultimately fails to hold him, as he was afraid to become one among the 'uncreative' and 'philistine' mimic men. He, then, turns his eyes towards

India, the land of his ancestors. The 'resting place for imagination,' in *An Area of Darkness*, turns out to be a restless and horrible place from where he only wanted to withdraw. In India, he was denied a distinct and special identity for which he longed and where, he did not want to be the one among the 'faceless' crowd. He is a restless traveller who is in a constant move to define himself and his position in the world. The country which is 'suspended' in time remains an isolated and impenetrable place which had produced his ancestors who had been born in India and had migrated to Trinidad as indentured labourers.

Naipaul's rejection and negation of India of the first visit with *An Area of Darkness*, turns out to be little mellowed in the second visit with *India: A Wounded Civilization*. He deals this time, with the country's spiritual emptiness, among many other problems: of accommodation, corruption and helplessness of a wounded old civilization. He is not at all satisfied with the Indian attitudes, ways of looking and feeling and thus keeps his distance. His visits to India, as he himself says, have been an inquiry, not only of his ancestral country but also as an inquiry into himself, his roots, his position and identity. In the process of his search for roots and identity, he realizes that, India is not his home and cannot be his home too. Yet, he can neither deny history, nor reject India and be indifferent to it, since it is the country from which his ancestors had migrated to the Caribbean island in the New World during the late 1880s. His blood is related to India. He cannot travel only for the 'sights,' as most other travellers from outside do. He is at once too close and yet too far. He can neither ignore his ancestral country nor could he really belong to it. This is the real problem of migrancy. The migrants belong to nowhere. They are unaccommodated outsiders everywhere.

Yet, the migrants or the exiles can never resist the pull of home. They are constantly haunted by the thought of home which often disturbs and disintegrates their mind. As seen earlier in this study, that the Indian migrants in Trinidad, were unwilling to return to India,

due to fear of insecurity, ritual purification (since they crossed the 'black water' and defiled themselves) and the loss of their present 'familiar temporariness' in the New World; they were 'afraid' of the unknown in India from which, they, their parents or grandparents came long ago. Once cut off from their own roots, tradition and culture, it becomes difficult for the migrants to attach themselves to the place of their origin, which often falls short of their expectations, and therefore, repels them. It is observed that, Naipaul's year-long stay in India, his ancestral country, during his first visit in 1962, could not bear any fruit. In other words, India failed to attract him and give shelter, when he was longing for home. This study shows how terribly he is shocked by the country's poverty, dust and public defecation that the India of his childhood imagination (as a mythical land) gets shattered. The memory of the unpleasant physical experience of his ancestral home, not only disturbs his mind, it disintegrates his life too. On his 'flight' from India, after his long stay, Naipaul writes in *An Area of Darkness* about his Indian trip, saying, it "was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two" (2002: 298). However, as a migrant himself, or a descendant of migrants, Naipaul's life had already been broken when he was born in the transplanted British colony in the New World, where his father had been living a homeless and unsettled life. It could have been another story, if his panicked father, as a child, had not hid himself in one of the latrines overhanging the sea at the depot on Nelson Island, when the family was 'passed' for repatriation in an immigrant ship. He (Seepersad) remained there until his mother changed her mind about the trip back to India (LO, 2004: 91). So, they stayed back and did not return. Stuart Hall's observation, therefore, seems to be justified in this case, when he says — "Migration is a one way trip. There is no "home" to go back to" (Baker *et al*, 1996: 115). Once they leave their home or homeland, the migrants get transformed or translated into 'homeless' beings who can hardly dream of a possible return.

Naipaul's concern for India and the genuineness of his sincerity has been questioned over the years, since the publication of *An Area of Darkness*, the first of his Indian trilogy. Had he been really concerned with India's poverty, misery, dust and defecation, disease and malnutrition, it can be argued, he would have responded to this *unpleasantness* in a different and more sympathetic way. He would not have rejected the benign hospitality of his ancestral village. He would have allowed them to touch his feet, as they had taken him to be God-sent; he would have shared the food, which they lovingly offered. He rudely rejects the hospitality of the poor Brahmin, Ramchandra, the present head of his grandfather's branch, who brings *prasad* (food offered to the deity) from his grandfather's shrine, which he condemns as "grubby little grey beads of hard sugar" (AAD, 2002: 281). He terms the happiness and excitement in these poor people on having a man of their branch whose grandparents had migrated long ago, as mere 'frenzy.' He is unable to feel the pulse of these poor relations, and therefore, maintains his (superior) distance. He has been 'made' by England with a Western sensibility and standard, ever since his arrival at the metropolitan 'centre' after his departure from the colonial 'periphery.'

Besides his ancestral migration to Trinidad, his own migration (at times referred to as 'escape') from that 'shipwrecked' island to England, Naipaul had broken his life further. His post-scholarship days in England, were really hard when he was penniless and struggling to write, and had no place/home to call his own in the strangeness of England. He might eventually locate himself in the metropolitan 'centre' among the woods of Stonehenge in Wiltshire, and have become a distinguished writer, a Nobel laureate; yet, his life remains broken and unsettled with the pain of a migrant's loss of past, tradition, culture and identity. As a man of 'two worlds' or more appropriately of multiple worlds, with 'divided loyalties,' he belongs to nowhere.

The migrants live split lives since they are people of “divided loyalties” (ABR, 2002: 173). Even the writers among them, though living in the metropolitan centers of the world, cannot avoid their past, their origin, the place they left behind especially for their writing material. Most of the postcolonial migrant writers, as Chelva Kanaganayakam[41] observes in Bruce King’s *New National and Postcolonial Literatures: An Introduction* (1998), “continue to write about the land they left rather the one in which they live” which, therefore, “problematizes the experience of exile” (201). Andrew Gurr[42] also makes an interesting study of the migrant writers and the literature of marginalization, in his *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (1981), saying that, an “artist born in a colony is made conscious of the culturally subservient status of his home and is forced to go into exile in the metropolis as a means of compensating for that sense of cultural subservience” (8). Gurr, however, identifies the Western metropolises as the centers for power, artistic refinement and knowledge production, while the margin or the colonies in the peripheries are seen as unrefined and philistine environments. Naipaul has been fully conscious of the subservient nature of his island, Trinidad, which he terms as ‘second hand’ and ‘barbarous’ and incapable of any creativity. In this regard, he is unlike other postcolonial migrant writers such as, Derek Walcott, Chinua Achebe, Edward Braithwaite, Ngugi Wa Thiongo and many others, who continue to maintain their native Caribbean or African identity. For Naipaul, “the Caribbean continues to be a place that denies him a sense of identity” (King, 1998: 204) where the Indian migrants never felt at home due to their sense of alienation arising out of deprivation,

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[41] Chelva Kanaganayakam is a professor in the Department of English at the University of Toronto. A scholar in postcolonial literature, he is also involved in Religion Studies. He is the Director of the Centre for South Asian Studies.

[42] Andrew John Gurr is a noted contemporary literary scholar who has specialized in Shakespeare and renaissance theatre. He was born in Leicester, England but spent most of his times in New Zealand and has worked in several universities including the Universities of Wellington, Leeds and Nairobi.

lack of opportunities, colonial mimicry and fierce racial prejudices. Hence, at an early age, he realizes this lacking in colonial Trinidad and decides to escape, in his own words, from the area of 'barbarity,' to the outer world, to the metropolitan centre of the world. The West Indian mixed or Creole society, including his own Indian immigrant society is unable to provide him any shelter, belongingness and identity.

It is widely known in contemporary discourse, that, colonial mimicry is constructed around ambivalence (Bhabha), the once colonized's mimicking the colonizer, is in a way, an attempt to assert his/her own identity. Thus, Naipaul's identity, like most of his characters, who figure both in his fiction and non-fiction, falls in an intermediate zone, where, his 'hybridity' and 'mimicry' bring about his ambivalent position with an uncertain and unstable identity. Moreover, he has no place to call his own, he always hangs in between, and therefore, blurs the boundary between the 'self' and the 'other,' identity and non-identity, home and unhomeliness.

As mentioned earlier in this study, that the Indian migrants in the Caribbean, are the victims of colonization. They had been transplanted from one part of the British Empire to another, for the interest of the colonizers. For those who were transplanted as indentured labourers in the plantation colonies, it was a kind of traumatic break from their country of birth, their origin, culture and religion. For them, India remains as a kind of memory and eventually, it becomes a kind of imaginary land for them. They are unable to locate or identify themselves in the New World which becomes though 'real,' yet remains an alien land for them and hence, they hang in-between the 'real' and the 'imaginary.' Thus, in such a situation, the question of identity and belongingness for the extended generations of indentured migrants becomes crucial and problematic. They are neither Indians nor West Indians, there is a third possibility of their identity — the unaccommodated and unrepresented 'in-between.'

Again, as language plays an important role in determining human identity, it will be worthwhile to invoke the Derridean idea of 'deconstruction.' Derrida argues that, language is unstable and ambiguous which 'disseminates' an infinite number of possible meanings. It is the 'ground of being' or the foundation from which human experience and knowledge of the world is generated. Lois Tyson[43] makes an interesting critique in deconstructing human identity, saying that, if language is the 'ground of being,' then the world is an infinite 'text' where an infinite chain of signifiers are always in action. As human beings are constituted by language, they also become texts which bear the implications for 'subjectivity' for what it means to be a human being. It is known that, one's experience of his/her world is produced by the language he/she speaks, which is unstable and ambiguous; he/she also becomes himself/herself unstable and ambiguous. The self-image of a stable identity that one has, is, in fact, just a comforting self-delusion which one produces in collision with one's culture which is highly unstable and fragmented though it tends to be stable and coherent (Tyson, 2006: 257). Tyson rightly observes:

> We don't really have an identity because the word *identity* implies that we consist of one, singular self, but in fact we are multiple and fragmented, consisting at any moment of any number of conflicting beliefs, desires, fears, anxieties, and intentions . . ." (Tyson, 2006: 257)

Though the deconstructive idea of human identity, addresses the identity and existence of the whole human kind, yet it is a commentary on the migrant people especially those who have left their places (in the periphery) for metropolitan places (in the centre). Since it deconstructs the binaries such as centre/periphery, civilization/barbarity etc., it offers a dynamic, evolving and problematical world where there is no 'centre' to hold us or our

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[43] Lois Tyson is a Professor of English at Grand Valley State University, USA. She got her PhD from Ohio State University and has published many scholarly books.

understanding of life, identity and existence. Thus, the migrants, in particular, wherever they locate or try to relocate, cannot have a stable identity. They have multiple and yet fragmented identities and hence, they cannot fully locate themselves in terms of place and identity. Naipaul, being a colonial man of Indian indenture background, can neither attach himself with Trinidad, his place of birth, nor with India, his ancestral country. Even in England, he is a stranger. He cannot even wholly belong to the fragmented and unstable postcolonial world.

In Naipaul's two African novels *In a Free State* and *A Bend in the River*, one can see the postcolonial disorder, inter-tribal conflicts and the problems of identity. Both these books offer "somber accounts of chaos at the time of the African transition to postcolonialism, foregrounding the lack of a coherent ideology or leadership that might fill the vacuum left by the old political order" (Hawley, 2004: 307-8). Both the novels depict Naipaul's vision of a free and fair world whose inhabitants might rise above the barriers of nation or nationality, and might consider themselves as the citizens of the world. Naipaul's European tramp in *In a Free State*, thus, regards himself a "citizen of the world" (2002: 3) who does not require any local or national identity. Naipaul wants to rise above the barriers of geo-political boundaries and regard himself a rootless global writer rather than confining himself to a particular regional or national identity.

Naipaul has no certainty of life and existence. His constant mobility symbolizes that the world is a place of dispersed people who constantly make and unmake themselves. The narratives of exile/migration or the fragmentation of the postcolonial self is no doubt, the result of colonialism that not only has shattered the geography and demography of the colonized lands but also the colonized self as well. Again, this fragmentation detaches or distances the colonial subject from the possibility of achieving a sense of reality or stability of the self. In *A Way in the World* (1994), Naipaul writes about the uncertainty of the life and existence of the Indian migrants:

> Most of us know the parents or grandparents we come from. But we go back and back, forever; we go back all of us to the very beginning; in our blood and bone and brain we carry the memories of thousands of beings . . . Sometimes, we can be strangers to ourselves. (2002: 9)

So, the migrants are strangers not only to the places they move in, but also they are aliens to themselves.

Naipaul's travels have made him so unsettled that no other writers of the colonial background feel so much dislocated not only with his own self but also with his theme and subject-matter. "Few writers even in the modern times of widespread migrancy," writes Harish Trivedi[44], "could have inherited a sensibility so widely dislocated and so deeply disjointed as V. S. Naipaul" (*Journal of Caribbean Studies*, Spring, 2008). His grandparents emigrated themselves as 'girmityas' or indentured labourers from an 'area of darkness' in a remote village in eastern Uttar Pradesh during colonial rule to Trinidad, from where, his further (dis/re)location to England, his imagined "spiritual and intellectual home" (Trivedi, 2008) accelerates and redefines the idea of migrancy. As time goes by, he realizes his position in the strangeness of England that he never feels at home there. Trivedi rightly observes that, even long after his arrival there, England remains for him an enigma like the surrealist painting "The Enigma of Arrival" of Giorgio de Chirico which suggests that after arrival, there can be no return.

The migrant's story runs parallel to that of the story suggested by the Chirico painting probably of a classical time. The migrant traveller (of the Naipaul story) would arrive at a

[44] Harish Trivedi is a Professor of English at the University of Delhi. His areas of interest and research are Comparative Literature and Postcolonial Literature and Translation Studies. He has published a number of scholarly works and articles including *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India*. Calcutta: Papyrus 1993; new ed., Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.

classical port with the walls and gateways like cut-outs and walk past two muffled figures (as figured in the painting) on the quayside. There is silence and desolation on the scene with the mystery of arrival. He would move from that scene of blankness to a gateway or door and enter there, but he would immediately be swallowed by the life and noise of a crowded city. His mission: family business, study or religious initiation might give him encounters and adventures. He would enter interiors of houses and temples and gradually there would come to him a feeling that he was getting nowhere. He would lose patience, his sense of mission and begin to understand that he was getting lost. His sense of adventure would give way to panic and shock that he would want to escape, to get back to the quayside and the ship that had brought him but he wouldn't know how. He would start imagining himself a victim. So, at the moment of crisis he would come upon a door and open it and find himself back on the quayside. He feels happy to be back on the shore, to have saved his life. But his happiness soon vanishes when he discovers that the antique ship had gone and he is left on his fate (TEA, 2002: 106-7).

It can, therefore, be said that, like most of his unsettled and unstable subjects, the migrant people in a postcolonial situation, one cannot really place Naipaul in one particular place or fixed identity. He is not only a placeless or homeless exile who has made futile attempt(s) to locate himself in the 'centre,' and it is futile because, many a times, he tries to invent an alternative space to (re)locate himself either in his birth-place, Trinidad or his ancestral country, India. He seems not to be happy even in his Wiltshire home in metropolitan England where he has 'centered' himself since past few decades. He wants to move, to travel to the periphery, among the 'wretched of the earth.' In a review of his latest work *The Masque of Africa: Glimpses of African Belief* (2010), Sameer Rahim makes an interesting observation saying that:

> It is puzzling why Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, at the age of 78, continues to punish himself with such travels. Perhaps, like his father, he is worried about what he sees when he looks in the mirror. Is he the Nobel Prize-winning sage who has written 30 acclaimed books over 50 years? Or is he a fraud, pretending to be a country gentleman in Wiltshire when his true home is among the wretched of the earth?" (*The Telegraph*, August 27, 2010)

His current location as a colonial migrant amid the woods and the remnants of a mighty former Empire stands as an incongruity. He can never be able to become an Englishman in the true sense; he can only mimic the Englishness or the Britishness just like the characters in his works ultimately turn out to be the mimic men. Thus, through mimicry he tries to (re)define his own place and identity. His hybrid location and identity, therefore, make him an individual who blurs the borders between the 'centre' and the 'periphery,' mimicry and authenticity, place and placelessness and above all, identity and non-identity.

Besides the problem of migrancy, and the migrants' subsequent crises of identity and existence, this study has also underlined Naipaul's dark vision of life. His much debated term 'area of darkness' not only symbolizes the physical darkness of India with its poverty, dust and defecation, it also stands for the darkness (ignorance) in the mind of the author himself. Effort has been made to show how unprepared and unequipped he was to deal with his subject(s) — the non-Arab Muslim world and India, his ancestral land.

As far as Islam and the identity of the 'converted' Muslims are concerned, this study shows how Naipaul, being deeply influenced by Orientalist and Eurocentric perceptions, has assessed Islam and its peoples, especially the non-Arabs. He has constructed the image of a Muslim convert as one who has erased his past and by accepting an 'imported' faith, has lost his identity. But, in reality, Naipaul could only construct negative stereotypes. He has tried to generalize all the (converted) Muslims and has put them in one category: 'fundamentalists.'

For him, the converted peoples are ‘nihilistic’ and ‘neurotic’ whose holy places lie in another country. It has been shown in this study that Naipaul himself is haunted by the lack of his past; his background in the disorderly colonial island where they had no sacred places. Their sacred places were in India, in another continent. His personal lack (of any past and sacred places), have been displayed through the non-Arab Muslims. This study, thus, shows how Naipaul, by erasing his own sad past (of indenture), and due to migration, has suffered from uncertainty, loss of identity and stable existence. His attempt to define or locate the identity of the ‘converted’ Muslims is, in a way, structured by his own experiential crisis.

This study also has tried to argue that, identity is unstable and fluid. It is, as Ian Chambers has defined, formed “on the move” (Chambers, 1994: 25). Just as language, as a means of communication and “cultural construction” (Chambers, 1994: 22), reconstitutes our sense of self, ideas of representation, and at the same time, differentiates us from what we are not, identity too, is always in the shift, in the process of making and unmaking, formation and re-formation. The centering of the postcolonial migrants at the metropolitan centers, has not only challenged the idea of centre/periphery, it appropriates the claim through their writings, their adaptations of the former colonial master’s language, culture, life-styles, that the migrant is the modern metropolitan figure. Chambers rightly argues that, it is the “dispersal attendant on migrancy,” that

> . . . disrupts and interrogates the overarching themes of modernity: the nation and its literature, language and sense of identity; the metropolis; the sense of centre . . . In the recognition of the other, of radical alterity, lies the acknowledgement that we are no longer at the centre of the world. Our sense of centre and being is displaced. As historical, cultural and psychic subjects we, too, are uprooted, forced to reply to our existence in terms of movement and metamorphosis.” (Chambers, 1994: 24)

This study has also critiqued Naipaul's assessment of the converted people's identity. Though Naipaul has pointed out that the convert's sacred language is Arabic, and by erasing his past, he becomes a part of the Arab story; but, language, in fact, gives one's sense of identity. It is the cultural indicator and thus, cannot be abandoned like old clothes or replaced by another. Language, as Chambers argues, is a cultural construction that creates our sense of self. It speaks for someone and from a specific place and it constructs a particular space, a habitat, a sense of belonging and being at home (1994: 22-23). Thus, one cannot simply choose another language (other than his mother tongue) since he/she cannot completely abandon his/her previous history. Our previous sense of knowledge, language and identity, our peculiar inheritance cannot be simply rubbed out of the story or cancelled. In fact, what is inherited as culture, history, language, tradition, sense of identity, cannot be destroyed but taken apart and opened up to questioning, re-writing and re-routing. The elements and relations of our language and identities, thus, can neither be put back together again in a new whole nor be abandoned and denied (Chambers, 1994: 24). The Muslim convert, thus, can never shed his past, his language, his tradition, his culture which he has inherited from generations. Arabic may be a sacred language for him, but it is not his essence; and thus, he can never be a part of the Arab story. This study, has, thus, tried to argue that all non-Arab converted peoples cannot be compartmentalized in a generalized single category. There are variations in them as far as landscape, language, culture, tradition, tastes and life-styles are concerned. In fact, Naipaul himself has erased his past, his ancestral culture, language and tradition by adopting the colonizer's language, culture and tradition to become a part of the colonizer's story.

Most of Naipaul's works, mainly his essays and memoirs, are self-reflections. Rising from a mere immigrant scholarship-boy to a Nobel laureate, Naipaul has known what it meant to be a destitute who is devoid of any past, history, home and identity. They tell the

stories of migrant and marginalized people who are in constant struggle to locate themselves in terms of place and identity. From his childhood, he had been surrounded by the 'areas of darkness' (the darkness within the impoverished Indian immigrant community as well as the darkness of a creole society in colonial Trinidad) which later become his subjects. He feels himself related with the world around him: the land, the aborigines, the New World, the colony, the history, India, the Muslim world, Africa and England. His Nobel lecture testifies this when he says, "everything of value about me is in my books . . . I am the sum of my books" (LO, 2004: 181-190). In his introduction to Naipaul's *Literary Occasions* (2003), Pankaj Mishra[45] rightly observes: "To recognise the fragmented aspects of your identity; to see how they enable you to become who you are; to understand what was necessary about a painful and awkward past and to accept it as part of your being" is a "ceaseless process" of remembering and reconstituting of an individual self, deep in its home and history. And it is what most of Naipaul's works have been compulsively engaged in (LO, 2004: xvi).

Naipaul is neither English nor Indian nor Trinidadian; he is his own person. In an interview with Rahul Singh, on being asked whether he felt more of an Indian since one of his later novel *Half a Life* portrayed an Indian from India as its main character, Naipaul retorts:

> What do you mean more Indian . . . ? I don't like such terms. I said when receiving the Nobel Prize that I was born in Trinidad, I have lived most of my life in England and India is the land of my ancestors. That says it all. I am not

[45] Pankaj Mishra is an eminent Indian essayist who regularly contributes in *The Pioneer*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The New Statesman* and *New York Review of Books*. He is also a promising writer of both novels and non-novels. *Butter Chickens in Ludhiana* (1995), and *The Romantics* (2000) are best known among his works.

> English, not Indian, not Trinidadian. I am my own person." (*The Times of India*, February 18, 2002)

Derek Walcott, however, has a different view. He opines that, Naipaul's judgment of Trinidad may be 'erratic' and 'vicious' but "he is a Trinidadian, he grew up there and he is a West Indian, though he may want to deny it" (*Newsday*, Friday, 12 October, 2001). Harish Trivedi, on the other hand, argues:

> . . . it has taken Naipaul a long and arduous journey through the wide world to become his own person. His life-story, as narrated in his variously autobiographical novels as well as travel books and explicitly autobiographical essays, constitutes perhaps the most acutely sensitive and anguished account of a person, born dispossessed, to claim and reclaim a number of possible locations, with the quest resulting at each renewed step in even more disillusioning failure. The various characters that he has created throughout his career who seek to fulfil or at least fill out their half lives by making their way in the world in one way or another seem collectively to be symbolic of the destiny of the migrant man." (*Journal of Caribbean Studies*, spring, 2008)

Naipaul seems to be or perhaps, pretends to be a man without stability. He is an eternal outsider in alien lands. This may be a political stance he is consciously adopting an appearance or identity of a have-not, a marginalized being. But, this very stance affords him immense powers and hence, he has nothing to loose. By claiming his rootlessness, he is therefore, appropriating global citizenship. He may be an Indian in Trinidad, a West Indian in metropolitan England or a British (since he carries a British passport) in India and a 'nomadic intellectual' as often referred to by many critics, in the marginalized Third World. He is both a postcolonial migrant and a traveller sheathed in one person. As a migrant, he

cannot have a possible return either to his place of birth, Trinidad or to his ancestral country, India. And again, as a traveller, he constantly moves on an on to explore the world, as his vision and mission have blurred the idea and meaning of 'home' and 'unhomeliness,' identity and non-identity. He is a "perpetual voyager" (*The Listener*, June, 1983) as Bernard Levin[46] calls him, who carries his roots with him and lives with all the things that have made him. Thus, by belonging to nowhere, he belongs to everywhere. In this way, he rises above the geo-political barriers or boundaries to be called 'a citizen of the world.'

No other writer, however, in the contemporary literary scene, is as controversial a figure as V. S. Naipaul. Most of his early works reveal the truth about his being a 'misogynist.' There are a very few women characters who appear in both of his fictional or non-fictional works — they are nondescript and often portrayed as prostitutes and degraded characters. In his personal life too, Naipaul had been very cruel to his English wife Patricia Hale. His biographer, Patrick French has brought into light, the other side, the 'monstrous' side of this great author, in his widely acclaimed book *The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V. S. Naipaul* (2008). Taken its title from the very first line of Naipaul's great African novel *A Bend in the River*, French's book reveals the shocking personal life of V. S. Naipaul. His infidelity (as he is reported to have regular visits to the prostitutes) and cruelty to his wife, it is believed to have hastened her death in 1996 due to cancer. He even kept an Argentine mistress, namely, Margaret Gooding whom he used and abused for twenty four years and dumped her as she became almost an old lady and no longer attractive. The book, thus, unmasks the other Naipaul. His friend turned critic, Paul

[46] Henry Bernard Levin is an eminent English journalist, broadcaster and author who had worked with numerous prestigious newspapers and magazines including *The Spectator*, *The Times* etc. His interview with V. S. Naipaul titled "V. S. Naipaul: A Perpetual Voyager" was first published in *The Listener*, 23 June, 1983 (16-17). Later, it was published in anthology edited by Feroza Jussawalla under the title, *Conversations with V. S. Naipaul*. University of Mississipi Press, 1997: 93.

Theroux[47] claims that, Naipaul's authorized biography has revealed the "true monster" in him, saying that, it is "not a pretty story; it will probably destroy Naipaul's reputation for ever, this chronicle of his pretensions, his whoremongering, his treatment of a sad, sick wife and disposable mistress, his evasions, his meanness, his cruelty amounting to sadism, his race baiting. Then there is the "gruesome sex", the blame shifting, the paranoia, the disloyalty, the nasty cracks and the whining, the ingratitude, the mood swings, the unloving and destructive personality" (*The Sunday Times*, April 6, 2008). The Naipaul critics, however, fail to observe some crucial points in this regard: they are — (i) the writer and his created works are separate entities, not to be confused as one; and (ii) it is Naipaul himself who authorizes the biography. It is, perhaps, an adroit political game of chess, and Naipaul, quite brilliantly, not only anticipates the defamation and public hue and cry, *but he creates it*.

Controversy never leaves him. In a recent interview in London at the Royal Geographic Society, Naipaul was asked if he considered any woman writer his literary match, he replied: "I don't think so." He, rather, finds no woman writer his literary match — not even Jane Austen. He believes that women writers have a "narrow view of the world" and are too sentimental because, a woman is "not a complete master of a house" and that reflects in her writings too. He even attacks his former friend and publisher Diana Athill for writing all those "feminine tosh" (*The Guardian*, June 2, 2011). Athill however, dismisses Naipaul's claim saying that his attack has just made her 'laugh' and is not worth to be taken seriously.

Besides all the controversies and criticisms, Naipaul is unquestionably a great literary genius, too attractive, too varied, and too diverse to be labeled and identified as *thus far and no more*. He has thirty acclaimed books in his credit in a long writing career of almost six decades and some of them are classic masterpieces. Growing up in a plantation colony with

[47] Paul Edward Theroux is an American writer of mixed birth who has had long friendship with V. S. Naipaul. He is a famous novelist and a travel writer widely known for his The Great Railway

an indentured background, he has emerged as the leading writer of the literary diaspora. As a representative writer of diaspora, Naipaul is best known not only in the academia but also in the whole literary world as one who gives expressions to the themes of identity crisis, rootlessnes, alienation and problem of location or homelessness. Though he has some limitations and error of judgments which have been highlighted in this study, yet, he is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures in the literary diaspora.

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BIO-DATA

Name	---	Kafeel Ahmed Choudhury.
Father's name	---	(L) Siraj Ali Choudhury.
Marital Status	---	Married.
Spouse	---	Jabin Sultana Choudhury.
Children	---	Imran & Abdullah (sons).
M. A.	---	North Eastern Hill University.
Designation	---	Associate Professor.
Institution	---	Govt. Zawlnuam College Zawlnuam, Mizoram (796471).
Interested in	---	Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Indian Writing in English.

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