Summation
Chapter Five

Summation

Postcolonial literature emerges after independence. Getting independence means that people are conscious, or have a notion of their own identity, different from that of the metropolis. Issues of identity, such as the effects on identity of racial and gender discrimination, of dislocation and relocation, of exile and homecoming, are prominent themes in postcolonial fiction. Identity crisis refers to a psychosocial state or condition of disorientation and role confusion occurring as a result of conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures and expectations and often producing acute anxiety. It is an analogous state of confusion occurring in a social structure, such as an institution or a corporation.

According to Erikson, “an identity crisis is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself” (11). Erikson described identity as:

a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality. In him we see emerge a unique unification of what is irreversibly given—that is, body type and temperament, giftedness and vulnerability, infantile models and acquired ideals—with the open choices provided in available roles, occupational possibilities, values offered, mentors met, friendships made, and first sexual encounters. (11-22)
Naipaul's writings deal with the cultural confusion of the Third World and the problem of an outsider, a feature of his own experience as an Indian in the West Indies, a West Indian in England and a nomadic intellectual in a postcolonial world. Naipaul being a diasporic and exploratory writer of contemporary life and thoughts presents complex contents in a simple existential way. Naipaul is a multilayered international writer and the question of his identity crops up because of his immigrant background and the displacement it caused. The concept of ethnicity has been used in recent discourses to map the cultural, social, political and national identities in the colonized world. On the contrary, he relates literature to life in order to examine the social groups, chaos, tradition, security of life, religion and the self. He realizes that the core of life can never be taken as a mirage; its truth lies in the search for self-identity. The present study explains the identity crisis in the postcolonial and psychological angst context in Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas, The Mimic Men* and *In a Free State*.

The study starts with the chapter “Introduction” which deals with the Indian English literature in general and traces the growth of Indian English Literature upto the period of the novelist in question. Among the literatures of the world, Indo-Anglian literature is a dynamic branch and has great inheritance commencing from the Vedas and it has continued to spread its mellow light and it is part of Indian literature, a modern facet of the glory which has ancient treasure of divine thoughts. The introduction of English into the complex, hierarchical language system of India has proved the most enduring aspects of this domination. The various writers of the fiction and their contribution to the Indian English literature is discussed in detail. It explains the contribution of different writers of Indo-Anglian literature from the period of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to Salman Rushdie and the contribution of trio writers. After stating the reasons for selecting of Naipaul and the novels, the biographical
account of Naipaul is discussed. It also details the life and works Naipaul. Among those Indian writers of Indian origin, Naipaul stands out in a unique way. He is a pioneer in Diaspora writing. Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born in Chaguanas, Trinidad, on August 17, 1932. He resided in London, travelling extensively and writing many critically acclaimed novels, short stories and essays.

Naipaul is known for his penetrating analyses of alienation and exile. In fiction and essays marked by stylistic virtuosity and psychological insight, he often focuses on his childhood and his travels beyond Trinidad. Writing with increasing irony and pessimism, he has often bleakly detailed the dual problems of the Third World - the oppressions of colonialism and the chaos of postcolonialism. The first fruit of Naipaul's escape from the colony was a series of gently satiric short novels set in Trinidad which include The Mystic Masseur (1957), The Suffrage of Elvira (1958) and Miguel Street (1959). Next came a big generational novel, A House for Mr Biswas (1961), is one of Naipaul's masterpiece. Using London as a permanent return base, Naipaul began to travel extensively after 1960. His prolific writing continued, alternating between autobiographical fiction and reportorial non-fiction based on these travels.

Naipaul's fifth novel Mr Stone and Knights Companion was published in 1963. In the novel The Mimic Men (1967), the action shifts between England and Trinidad. In a Free State (1971), is set in a sub-Saharan African state in uneasy transition between incompetent postcolonial governments. Powerful descriptive passages juxtapose hauntingly beautiful natural settings with the detritus of European technology. New themes of sadistic violence and homosexuality link this work with the longer Guerrillas (1975). Naipaul's finest sustained work, A Bend in the River was published in 1979. The Enigma of Arrival (1987), was classified as a fiction, although
much of the material is indistinguishable from Naipaul's own life. Though all his novels lend themselves to different layers of arguments and conflicting perspectives, the three novels *A House for Mr Biswas*, *The Mimic Men* and *In a Free State* have been taken up for indepth study and analysis.

*A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), regarded as the masterpiece of Naipaul's brilliant career, is an unforgettable story inspired by Naipaul's father. It has been hailed as one of the twentieth century's finest novels. It was this book that first brought Naipaul a worldwide acclaim. This richly comic novel tells the moving story of a man without a single asset who enters a life devoid of opportunity and whose tumble-down house becomes a potent symbol of the search for identity in a postcolonial world.

*The Mimic Men* (1967), is probably Naipaul's second most important novel which portrays the life in a London bedsitter and the lives of political exiles. Ralph Kripalsingh, the main character, is the representative of a generation which gains power at independence and can only mimic the authenticity of selfhood.

*In a Free State*, a novel by Naipaul, published in 1971 consists of a framing narrative and three short stories. The work is symphonic with different movements working towards an overriding theme. The theme is not so clearly spelled out, but there is an important aspect relating to the price of freedom with analogies between the three situations. Their primary concerns are identity crisis, psychological trauma and the several and cultural shocks the characters undergo when they are confronted by unknown and unfamiliar conditions. The brief story summary of the novels has been given in the last part of the introduction. The meaning of identity crisis is also discussed.
The second chapter “Postcolonial Themes” explores the themes which Naipaul has used in these novels. It includes the concept of postcolonialism, postcolonial writers and postcolonial themes. Postcolonialism refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture and human identity itself are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to all culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today. Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions between European nations and the peoples they colonized. The important postcolonial themes are identity crisis, diaspora, alienation, rootlessness, migration, creolization, individualism, mimicry and hybridity.

Identity crisis is the major theme in the postcolonial novels. The theme of alienation is worked and reworked in the novels of Naipaul. Naipaul's novels and non-fictional works address the growing sense of displacement experienced by newly independent Third World Nations. This study deals with the major postcolonial themes of identity crisis of the three novels. It explores the identity of Biswas in *A House for Mr Biswas*, Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men* and Bobby in *In a Free State*. The manifest theme is the identity crisis, but on another level the cultural clashes within and the gradual disintegration of the East Indian community forms the major preoccupation. The Study is an attempt to analyse the problems of identity crisis, displacement and disintegration as well as the effects of colonialism on the culture and psyche of the colonized.

According to Parag, Mr Biswas’ house is “a central, unifying and integrating metaphor (representing) a search for emancipation from dependence” (136). Although Naipaul’s novel has an autobiographical motif, in a deeper sense it succeeds in
transcending the individual self by universalizing the issues of alienation and rootlessness in a postcolonial world. *A House for Mr Biswas* exemplifies bondage of an individual and a society and it is also a work which demonstrates how a motif of freedom is achieved. At the individual level it is the story of Mohun Biswas who moves from bondage to freedom and Naipaul explains it with autobiographical reminiscences.

Biswa is an everyman craving for identity in the midst of nonentities. At one stage his crisis of identity is extremely acute but real. Looking at himself in a mirror, he says to Sharma, “I don’t look like anything at all. Shopkeepers, lawyers, doctor, labourers, oversees I don’t look like any of them” (*HMB* 159). It clearly projects the longing for his identity and desire to look like one of them. The alienated people of Naipaul seek asylum in order to establish their identity. *A House for Mr Biswas* is the portrayal of a single individual’s search for identity, his struggle to arrive at authentic selfhood. It is obvious in Biswas’s reply to his son who asks him, “Who are you? He replies I am just somebody. Nobody at all. I am just a man you know” (279).

In *The Mimic Men* the main character Singh has grown up in a colonized society, therefore he has an identity problem. He can fit himself neither into Isabella nor into England when he goes there. He has a strong feeling of displacement and homelessness. All his life he searches for a place he can call his home. After years spent both in Isabella and in England and other countries he travelled to, he understands that he can be happy in England. He gets adapted to the English society and overcomes his feelings of conflict and displacement.

*The Mimic Men* is the fictional memoir of protagonist Ralph Singh. Written in a boarding house in London, it is a retrospective, first-person account of Ralph’s life, ranging over his childhood in the fictional West Indian island of Isabella, his university
days in London where he meets and marries his wife and his somewhat successful business and political careers back in Isabella. Ralph Singh is also a prototypical colonial character, an intelligent and sensitive person confused by the plural but unequal society he is raised in and for whom identity is a primary issue. Ralph has the opportunity to weave in reflection with narrative and self-analysis through flashbacks and memories.

Singh suffers from dislocation and alienation because of his educational background. As a victim of the colonial education system and curriculum, Singh has always been encouraged to imitate the empire and to become a "mimic man":

My first memory of school is of taking an apple to the teacher. This puzzles me. We had no apples on Isabella. It must have been an orange; yet my memory insists on the apple. The editing is clearly at fault, but the edited version is all I have. (TMM 90)

Moreover, Singh's colonial education has taught him that the mother country, England, is the symbol of order. When he studies English culture and history, he feels that his own culture, if there is any, is inferior to that of the colonizer. Hence, Singh's colonial education has caused him to become a homeless man with no self-image. Singh keeps asking himself whether he is the product of his colonial education. He both recognizes and criticizing colonial mimicry, but he also knows that he cannot help being a mimic man as he is "a specific product of a particular socioeconomic formation called colonialism" (Cudjoe 100). In his attempt to find his identity and the ideal landscape, Singh goes to London only to realize that the city does not promise anything to an East Indian colonial subject as he can never identify himself with it. In London, Singh
realizes that he can never be an Englishman in spite of his public school education and that one can be English only if he is born in England.

Immigrants face an identity problem when they migrate. Some can get over the problem of identity. Before they can have the identity of their new country they go through a long process which consists of rejection, adjustment and adaptation and integration periods. The final stage is the stage of assimilation but since it means giving up one’s culture and identity completely it is hard to reach this stage and it is more likely for the second or third generation immigrant families to get assimilated. However, even some of the new-generation immigrants continue living in their adopted country still preserving their old identities.

The theme of identity plays equally an important role in *In a Free State*. In this novel, one comes across a steamer carrying people of different nationalities like the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Lebanese and the Spanish. For these people, the concept of home has lost some of its original force but still they seek to create alternate centres of identity. Santosh discovers his initial identity only through his reflection in the mirrors, seeing himself as an attractive man. Besides this, he seeks his identity in money, status, achievement and the citizenship of the United States but things go wrong. He experiences hopelessness and fragmentation. Santosh has no home to return to. He is homeless, alone and lost. Bobby and Linda also struggle with their identity-quest and discover the fact that their identities are to be found in the alien land of Africa. The problem of identity haunts even Dayo and his brother. Morris comments them as though the characters have fully realized that their life in which one cannot have both safety and freedom together, “There is a distant realization that one can be safe, one can be free but one cannot be both” (7).
Identity becomes the fulcrum upon which the postcolonial character revolves. Each character that is created suffers from a certain lack of direction in their lives. They all suffer a crisis of identity in the absence of a strong traditional culture. This crisis of identity, while not uncommon in other literature, is most severe when viewed in postcolonial literature. It is the idea that the identity of an individual is so malleable that postcolonial literature focuses on. The identities of the postcolonial characters are mirrored in the struggle to form an emotional or cultural or societal identity that reflects the experiences of a distant past they cannot recall. Identity becomes an overwhelming emotional force in the character’s lives. While the social identities of people are rooted in their culture, one’s identity at an individual level is formed by personal dreams and achievements. In order to achieve a sense of completeness it is necessary to fuse individual and social consciousness, something that is even more difficult in a colonial society like Trinidad. This search for identity forces their decisions and guides their lives in directions that seem almost irrelevant. The struggle for an identity apart from the colonial power becomes paramount.

Search for identity follows the feeling of alienation. Biswas struggles in a hostile environment only seeking his identity. Ralph migrates to London seeking identity. Santosh’s perplexity reflects a quest for finding an answer to the problem of self-identity. The identity crisis has been a personal problem of Naipaul too. He symbolises his rootlessness and it spontaneously influences his novels. It is a resplendent symbol which is not within his reach. It looks as though Naipaul is pining for what is not. Bobby and Linda experience alienation in In a Free State which gets expressed in their aimless travels. To them freedom has no significance except that it means aimless travel in an alien land. Santosh, the transplanted Indian from the pavements of Bombay, feels alienated in the United States in a strange environment.

214
Hybridity is in the form of retrieval or the revival of the pre-colonial past. This can be in either reviving folk or tribal cultural forms or conventions or adapting contemporary artistic and social productions to suit the present-day conditions of globalization, multiculturalism and transnationalism. Naipaul describes a Caribbean identity in which roots have been erased and new ideas and ideologies planted.

*A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* dramatize the socio-historical effects of colonialism in Trinidad and focus on the plight of Indo-Caribbean men, albeit in different historical moments and class positionings. Through their personal trials and tribulations, the protagonists demonstrate how East Indian men in the British Caribbean performed their gender in reaction to a larger culture of domination, in ways that continued to undermine, as well as strengthen, their individual agency. Naipaul's depiction of the performative aspects of masculinity, explores the ways in which how gender, specifically masculinity, is intimately connected to questions of cultural survival and identity formation as interwoven with issues of race, class, ethnicity and nation. The socio-historical contexts of *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* – show the power relations that circumscribed the performances of masculinity for both the Whites and the natives. An exploration of masculinity within a single culture is complex enough, yet the effect is infinitely multiplied, once creolization (the combination and interculturization of different ethnic populations), as well as colonialism (the active enforcement of British imperialism), are taken into consideration.

The cultural fusion and hybridization of ‘new diasporas’ surfaces and creates new forms of creolization.
We drove along narrow rough roads into the valleys of our eastern hills. We went through purely mulatto villages where the people were a baked copper colour, much disfigured by disease. They had big light eyes and kinky red hair. My father described them as Spaniards. They were a small community, exceedingly poor, separate even in slave days and now inbred to degeneracy, yet still distinguished by an almost superstitious fear and hatred of full-blooded Africans and indeed of all who were not like themselves. They permitted no Negroes to settle among them; sometimes they even stoned Negro visitors. We drove through Carib areas where the people were more Negro than Carib. Ex-slaves, fleeing the plantations, had settled here and intermarried with the very people who, in the days of slavery their great tormentors, expert trackers of forest runaways, had by this intermarriage become their depressed serfs. Now the Caribs had been absorbed and had simply ceased to be. (TMM 130-131)

Despite a ferocious fight against outsiders, the Spaniards lost their purity of blood. It is with horror that Singh regards the process of creolization which they undergo; consequently, biased by colonial prejudices, he describes the mulatto villagers as ugly, degenerate people. On the other hand, the passage conveys a positive message (possibly unintended), too, “the hunters and the hunted may pass over former disputes and form a new community, as it has happened with the Caribs and the blacks” (Ania Lumba 121).

The expectations of Mohun Biswas are not great, all he wants is a house of his own, some dignity, some privacy, where the irritations of his in-laws can be viewed from afar. Set in Trinidad, we follow him through a plethora of jobs; we are with him
as son, husband, father and testy family man until his final triumph - a peculiar house of his own. This is the fullest portrait of an East Indian family in the process of creolization.

Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* expose conflicting and contradictory performances of masculinities in a colonized, creolized culture. Focusing on Naipaul's male protagonists, the complex interconnections between gender performance, nationalism, race, class and ethnicity destabilize Indo-Caribbean masculinities and exacerbate power imbalances at a personal and cultural level.

Mimicry has been discussed in connection with Naipaul predominantly under its postcolonial aspect; as a cultural process by which the colonized copies the colonizer. A key figure in the debate over the term is Homi Bhabha; his essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" starts from poststructuralist premises in order to demonstrate, "that colonial mimicry produces not only resemblance, but also difference, thus being ambivalent and therefore potentially subversive" (86). Among the examples illustrating Bhabha's point, we find that of "Naipaul's colonial politician as play-actor (Ralph Singh from *The Mimic Men*)". (88)

They suffer from dislocation, placelessness, fragmentation and loss of identity. As these psychological problems remain unsolved even after independence is achieved, independence itself becomes a word but not a real experience. Without the colonizer, the colonized see themselves as lost in their postcolonial society that fails to offer a sense of national unity and identity. Themes of alienation, mistrust, rootlessness, mockery and self-deception will certainly continue to pervade throughout his work. Naipaul is regarded as a pillar of Britain's cultural establishment, inspite of being a
symbol of modern rootlessness. The notion of a diasporic identity has been adopted by
the author as a positive affirmation of their hybridity.

In these three novels, the dominant themes of postcolonial writings are
alienation, rootlessness and fluidity resulting in creolization. He openly acknowledges
his nostalgic feelings about how much he owes to his island. It has given him the
themes which made him a writer and a metropolitan. Themes for him speak through
actions and ideas are valuable only when they are practicable. Historically, this is
considered as one of the results of colonization and regarded as one of the aspects of
postcolonialism. The writer presents a grim picture of the pathetic plight of the,
indentured and alienated Indian labourers, who are uprooted, exploited and driven
homeless in an unknown land. In A House for Mr Biswas as in The Mimic Men,
Naipaul demonstrates the colonized people’s predicament and their struggles for a
place in the world stemming from their feeling of alienation, isolation, homelessness,
rootlessness and placelessness.

Mr Biswas, one of the major heroes of Naipaul, experiences alienation right
from his birth. After the death of his parents, the family is scattered and a strong sense
of alienation comes over him. Hanuman House symbolizes for him a movement from
instability to stability. His life is marked by series of hostilities. Initially, he is depicted
as an acceptable citizen. He feels that he is a misfit in the Tulsi clan. Mr Biswas’
alienation is a result of withdrawal from a situation to which he cannot cope with. It is a
consequence of his vivid imaginative life coloured by the alien influences of his
colonial experience which channelizes his ambition unrealistically.

The Mimic Men examines the diasporic experiences and subsequent despair of
an immigrant student, the tensions associated with mixed marriage and the cultural and
political situation of a colony. Ralph Singh is the protagonist in the novel. He feels alienated both in the Caribbean land and in the London society. Naipaul illustrates this from his own life. His London life is like Wordsworth’s poem about “Daffodils” to an Indian. He feels exiled in London and hence cheerless. He tries to discover the essence of his life only through writing. To him, home is nothing but the books he writes.

Bobby and Linda experience alienation in *In a Free State* which gets expressed in their aimless travels. To them, freedom has no significance except that it means aimless travel in an alien land. Santosh, the transplanted Indian from the pavements of Bombay, feels alienated in the United States in a strange environment. His struggle for existence in an alien land is obvious. To him, the concept of freedom is only an illusion. It even leads to revulsion and a separation from his own sense of belonging. The quest for identity which is close knit with the theme of alienation comes as another important theme of Naipaul. It is a theme which recurs almost in all his novels. The problem for the commonwealth writer is to create an identity for his characters, which often take the form of search. His vision has never faltered, but on the other hand, it has widened in the sense of moving into other cultures and regions.

The fictitious island of Isabella serves as a background to the story narrated by Ralph Singh. This is a newly independent country in the Caribbean whose people face the challenges of self-governing. As the colonial experience left them with the feeling that they belong to an inferior culture, they try to identify themselves with the empire. However, as they are different from the master in cultural, traditional, racial and religious backgrounds, they can never successfully associate themselves with the colonizer. They suffer from dislocation, placelessness, fragmentation and loss of identity. The result is that they become mimic men who imitate and reflect the
colonizer's life style, values and views. Moreover, even though they have won their independence, the postcolonial society fails to offer them a sense of national unity and identity.

The three novels *A House for Mr Biswas*, *The Mimic Men* and *In a Free State* deal with these prominent postcolonial themes. Kenneth Ramchand suggests that *A House for Mr Biswas* is a novel of "rootlessness par excellence" (92). The themes and the protagonists show how traditional structures such as joint family, religion and native environment have collapsed and how their collapse has led to further disintegration of basic social structures. These social structures which bound people together and gave them a sense of identity, security and belonging have no relevance anymore. Hence postcolonial characters, as shown by Naipaul are drifters with ambiguous identities. Considering the diasporic writers as such, Naipaul stands aloof as he points out how a cultural geographical shift gives a shock to an individual, the outcome being psychological trauma.

In John McLeod's opinion, the two opposing models of mimicry in the case of Naipaul and Bhabha:

Previously, the notion of mimicry has been seen as a condition of the colonised's subservience and crisis, the measure of their powerlessness. We can find this view at times in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*; its most famous expression is perhaps the Trinidadian V.S. Naipaul's novel *The Mimic Men* (1967). But Bhabha refuses the defeatism in Naipaul's work and offers a much more positive, active and insurgent model of mimicry. (88)
Singh's desire to break away from his position as mimic man to actual manhood - a mature state synonymous with exploring the unexplored, with imposing order on chaos, with civilization and its colonizers and writers - is humiliatingly thwarted by the childlike Stella and her childish tales. This helpless struggle of Singh for an original identity apart from the "fixed, flat postures" described for him by the colonizer, or that already enacted by the colonizer upon the world, only makes him realize the extent to which his identity depends on the colonizer, for even his desire to become his own person always leads him to a London which only affirms there can be no originality; that he can only choose between the act of mimicry available to him in the city, or the "fixed, flat postures" available to him in Isabella: both roles forged by the colonizer (TMM 254). "The city and snow, the island and the sea: one could only be exchanged for the other", he thinks to himself on a plane carrying him back to Isabella after his affair with Lady Stella has ended (254). The choice depends on what form of identity proves more urgent, the need to possess the power of the colonizer, or the need to differentiate oneself from the colonizer. Naipaul has had to make the same choice in his decision to become a writer living in London, writing for an English audience.

The third chapter "Psychological Angst in the Characters" explicates the psychological approach and angst in the characters. 'Angst' is a key term in the psychological study of characters, especially diasporic characters because these characters are always in a state of suspension and rootlessness. The nearest synonym is anxiety, though it does not capture the full meaning of the word. There are typically feelings of dread and frustration in a fluctuating balance. Psychological interpretation can afford many profound clues toward solving a work's thematic and symbolic mysteries, but it can seldom account for the beautiful symmetry of a well-wrought poem or of a fictional masterpiece. Though the psychological approach is an excellent
tool for reading beneath the lines, the interpretive craftsman must often use other tools, such as the traditional and the formalistic approaches, for a proper rendering of the lines themselves.

Postcolonial novels are psychological in their approaches. The psychological approach became popular and gained currency after the traditional moralistic approach was found to be inadequate to deal with the psychological angst that haunt people in diasporic situations. Postcolonial fiction cannot ignore this angst because colonization has led to mixed identities and hybrid consciousness. It analyses the psychological approach of the character in the novels. His characters are incessantly under conflict and they seek a place of identity. Immigration proves a pleasant experience only to a few immigrants who succeed in assimilating themselves with the new geographical, cultural, social and psychological environment. Angst or anxiety is a hallmark of these ambiguous identities. Mr Biswas in *A House for Mr Biswas* suffers from an identity crisis. His longing for a home is a metaphor for Biswas’ search for permanence and roots. In Biswas’s the journalist there is always a longing for freedom and his intention is to move away into his own house and exist there entirely on his own terms. Biswas is highly reflective, reading and dreaming, attracted by morbid stories. As a reporter, he is admired and respected. He is imaginative and philosophical and his controlled romance with his literary fantasies has no correlation to the uncontrolled chaos of his life outside.

The depiction of Biswas is a little different from other characters. It is very absorbing and invites one’s attention from the beginning. He is bitter, alienated, sensitive, moody, tragic and comic at the same time. It is this complexity that becomes an interesting personality. His life turns out to be greater than some of his mundane
parts. He matters little in the Hanuman House, which is the empire of Tulsi, his mother-in-law. He is swindled and repeatedly defeated by society. Naipaul does not grant any designation to Biswas, though he portrays him as a major figure. Naipaul is keen on presenting even the minute details such as Biswas’ sight, sound and smell.

The Hindu rituals are another fantasy for most of the Tulsi families disintegrate through intermarriages, greed, corruption, the American influx and university education. This created a cultural change in the family. Biswas feels alienated in every house that he occupies. When he finally acquires a house at Sikkim Street, it bridges the gap between expectation and achievement. The house is a symbol of freedom, personal independence, pride, dignity and the redemption of all past trials. In the novel, houses stand for stability and refuge from the shapeless outer world, but Hanuman House is like an alien white fortress, a prison where Biswas feels trapped. His ‘ego’ demands salvation from such a prison. In this novel, people are being depicted as being poor and culturally deprived. Good professions are out of their reach. Bribing and trickery are practiced by a few. Women are slaves to child-rearing and household chores. Their occupations include seasonal field work, garbage collection and carpentry. The more fortunate ones run small shops. As in other novels of Naipaul, the minor characters, though large in number, mainly contribute to the development of the main character, Biswas. He dominates the whole novel from the beginning to the very end.

_The Mimic Men_ as the title suggests, is a novel of shadows. The main character lacks real substance. The novel talks about the independent East Indians. Though free, these people have no identity in or affinity towards their colonizers. They are uncertain of their positions in the society. Ralph Singh the central character tries desperately to
create an identity. His writing career cannot reconcile him with his Hindu identity. Though he poses as a Hindu, in moments of crisis he abandons this identity – a castaway. In short, John Thieme describes him as a Hindu Castaway. In his statement,

Singh’s life has become, like Garbage’s Struggling Cheese, something to be caught, dissected, and devoured ... withdrawal ... leaves him as much a Hindu Castaway as ever. Neither his physical nor his mental journeying has brought him any real fulfilment. (517 – 518)

Naipaul’s characters like Biswas and Ralph Singh are all generally silhouettes, stripped of their individuality. They are simply shunted between inaction and opportunity. They are left in a confusion in Trinidad’s social and political structure. They are caught up in a web from which they find it very difficult to extricate themselves. Among them, Biswas is a unique creature in English fiction.

Ralph Singh, the narrator of The Mimic Men, is a forty-year-old colonial minister who lives in exile in London. By writing his memoirs, Singh tries to impose order on his life, reconstruct his identity and get rid of the crippling sense of dislocation and displacement. In other words, Singh is the representative of displaced and disillusioned colonial individuals and colonization is depicted as a process that takes away their identity, culture, history and sense of place. Thus, the novel considers the “relationship between the socio-political and the psychological consequences of imperialism” (Thieme 113). This means that “to read the novel just for its politics is to destroy its emphasis on the psychological problems of colonial people” (King 72).

In The Mimic Men, the first generation of freed East Indians, bereft of culture, float aimlessly in shifting social relations. Again in this novel, the characters are fragmented and uncertain of their position within the society. Fantasy is almost a
common trait of all characters in this novel. They simply mimic and pretend to be other than what they really are. They become folk heroes mainly because they are depicted as son, husband, student, business man, politician and diplomat, striving hard to be someone.

All the characters in *In a Free State* live suspended, uprooted lives. They have escaped the constraints of ordered lives but in this process they come to inhabit a no man’s land. Characters like Bobby and Linda find themselves in hostile environments. Bobby and Linda live in a void and in a land of illusions. The novel also is filled with non-permanent characters – exiles, tourists, expatriates and the like. Santosh who comes to live in Bombay from a village is an obscure man. Though he is successful, he feels lost in the city. He is cut off from his rich traditional past and falls into an existence that leads him nowhere. Finally to Santosh even his freedom is burdensome. Santosh is in a way Naipaul himself – a diaspora.

In *In a Free State*, Naipaul conveys a sense of mindless brutality not only against whites, based on resentment - but the even more savage inter-tribal conflict. The Africans are not made out to be more vicious or brutal - it is just that violence and brutality seem to be an inescapable part of living. According to Angus Calder in fact, “the constant imminence of terror” in man's everyday life is one of Naipaul's favourite themes (483). As Alfred Kazin puts it, "What makes Naipaul hurt so much more than other novelists of contemporary exodus is his major image - the tenuousness of man's hold on the earth" (373).

To Naipaul, creation is perception, judgement or resolution and a recollection in tranquility through the characters. In the cases of Biswas in *A House for Mr Biswas* and Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men* the act of writing completes the depiction of them and
makes them whole. Naipaul creates a sign-painter and journalist in Biswas and a politician and writer in Ralph. But none of his heroes continue as writers for long. Biswas’s writing ends once his house has been bought, Ralph Singh is not a success as a writer. In this, they reveal an organic unity with their communities which have no noble ideals to pursue. Naipaul singles out some prominent features of characters and caricatures then as the story progresses. In *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul demonstrates the colonials’ predicament and their struggle for a place in the world stemming from their feeling of alienation, isolation, homelessness, rootlessness, and placelessness.

The fourth chapter “Techniques” deals with the different techniques used in the novels by Naipaul. Literary techniques are tools, methods and a part of author’s style to express and give more meaning to their writing. Novelist use a variety of techniques to convey their messages. There are major techniques and minor. Some writers use certain techniques repeatedly in their works, while some adopt a variety of techniques - each selected to suit the theme. The techniques put together form a style of writing that is characteristic of a writer. Often style and themes become inseparable.

Naipaul examines in his works the different facets of colonialism in the era of political independence. His work ought not to be treated as something spontaneous, immediately accessible, ready to be received, described or modified by the reader. The reader has to encounter and struggle with the text, as the author himself does. He writes in his fiction about Trinidad. Naipaul’s narrative technique can rightly be called unique. His prose is an elegant instrument for ironic dissection. His is not merely an exponent of new forms and new modes of presentation but a discoverer of the reality behind the situation. His techniques are as varied and colourful as his themes. Naipaul’s narrator wrests meaning out of an apparently meaningless situation through a perpetual sense of
wonder and a desire to remake the world. The novel becomes the vehicle of a man's ontological need for personal order. Naipaul's main aim is to relate literature to life. Satire is one of the important modes and purposes of his writing. As a genre, satire is an artistic or literary expression which generally aims at amusement and instruction. Often it is used primarily to set right individuals or to effect reform on society by means of ridicule.

In *A House for Mr Biswas*, the narrative technique is used. All the titles of the novels chosen for the study are symbolic and symbolism is a major technique in Naipaul. The House is a symbol of the security that Biswas longs for. The structure of the novel embodies recurring images of darkness, death and decay. The prologue itself anticipates much of the action that follows in the novel. The narration, further, concentrates on his isolation, on the feelings of an aged, weak and powerless person and on the frail fantasies he constructs, being unable to cope up with reality. There is no extravagant illusion, but a victory over chaos.

Naipaul constructs the migrant identity in the novel *The Mimic Men*. The narrator protagonist of the novel, Ralph Singh, has no strong bonds to any one discourse or geographical place. The form Naipaul has chosen for this novel is that of the fictional autobiography. He lives amidst and in between, the often antagonistic cultural discourses that are present in the reality surrounding him. It aims to show how a person who occupies this kind of cultural border or liminal space is capable of creating a new identity for himself or herself through the narrative rearrangement of the past. This narrative construction forms into a third dimension, which has its own peculiar temporal and spatial structure and its own logic, which differ considerably from the traditional Western ideology of linear time and causal relationships. *The*
Mimic Men is a title suggesting mimicry, to imitate and to act. The characters are shadows who act without substance. Ralph Singh is a blend of reality and imagination. Naipaul uses the stream-of-consciousness technique. The Mimic Men is narrated as a memoir; the stream of consciousness technique becomes an apt method for narration. The action moves backward and chronologically backward.

Naipaul's uses in his fiction In a Free State, to reflect his acceptance that he has become a man of the world without a home, whose subject matter and themes will be concerned with the problems and disorders of the postcolonial world. The writing of a sequence of stories and diary extracts set in different countries and mixing autobiography with fiction shows his awareness that in his exile and travels he has become representative of the postcolonial world and of the modern human condition. In a Free State uses the scientific metaphor of suspended free floating particles that do not settle down. In ironic sense, "free" may mean "independent" or "freedom" and "state" may mean "country" or "condition".

In In a Free State all the characters in one way or the other escape the constraints of their own culture to live in a free state. They agitate in void without place, purpose or belief. They are incapable of action. But finally, they discover that they belong nowhere. The characters are uncreative, vulnerable, terrified and dependent.

Cinematic techniques such as flashback and dissolving are also used. The novel's framework takes the form of an autobiography. This autobiographical slant adds authenticity and in The Mimic Men Ralph Singh becomes the alter-ego of Naipaul himself. Ralph's egotistical and narrow-minded perspective is reminiscent of Naipaul's early writings. The Theatre of the Absurd and cinema do not exclude each other; This is
explained by postcolonial literature’s penchant towards popular culture, whose main representative is cinema. As a writer living in a postcolonial age, Naipaul freely mixes “high culture” (theatre) with “low culture” (cinema). *The Mimic Men*, which describes Sandra’s departure as follows: “For me it was a moment of another type of drama: the aeroplane the cinematic symbol: Bogart in Casablanca, macintoshed, alone on the tarmac, the Dakota taking off into the night.” (199)

The unnamed Trinidadian protagonist of the story “Tell Me Who to Kill” is an extreme case, a madman. He not only models his life after Hollywood films, but also interprets everything from a cinematic perspective as in the final passage, which blurs the borderline between Trinidad, England and the world of the movies:

I have my own place to go back to. Frank will take me there when this is over. And now that my brother leave me for good I forget his face already, and I only seeing the rain and the house and the mud, the field at the back with the para-grass bending down with the rain, the donkey and the smoke from the kitchen, my father in the gallery and my brother in the room on the floor, and that boy opening his mouth to scream, like in Rope. (*IFS* 107-108)

Satire and irony are his weapons to expose the follies and weaknesses of the society, as he has variously found them. Caricature, exaggeration, deliberate character distortions, reprimand and censure are a few of the devices he uses. Ralph has been treated satirically. Naipaul mocks at the Tulsis and their religious superstitions. Naipaul highlights apathy, slavish attitudes, corruption and greed. Ironic humour plays an important role in presenting the angularities of people sometimes resulting in sheer
comedy. Biswas's escape from Tulsidome and Ralph's father becoming a Gurudeva all of a sudden are instances coloured by touches of irony.

Naipaul is not only a master of irony and satire, but also a master artist in using symbols, which lie scattered in his novels. Shipwreck is a haunting symbol for Ralph Singh. The room in London as seen by Ralph Singh is a gloomy symbol suggesting claustrophobia and deadness. The Hanuman House is a symbol of orthodox Hinduism. The doll's house symbolises Biswas's wish fulfilment, as the cricket field symbolises English values. Naipaul is a typical postcolonial writer. Displacement and alienation are authentic experiences to him as he himself shares multiple identities. His roots are Indian but he has been transplanted in an alien West Indian society. So his autobiographic streak lends authority to his voice and art.

By presenting different times, places and situations, he tries to put the parts together to complete the puzzle and rewrite his life. He considers the notions of colonization, decolonization, history, culture, race and politics, to write his own story and to give meaning to his existence. Hence, the novel presents Singh's desire to learn "what it means to be a colonial subject in a postcolonial society" (Cudjoe 99). The constant shifts between the past, the present and the future may also reflect Singh's internal chaos. A John Thieme has suggested, this technique is suitable for presenting "social and psychological disturbances" (114).

The fifth chapter entitled "Summation" only sums up the salient features and the important findings of the researcher in the previous chapters. Naipaul though an early writer is a postcolonial writer. His work deal with the concept of diaspora long before the ideas became popular. His novels are preoccupied with displacement, loss of
identity, survival in alien lands and shifting fortunes. As a diaspora himself, Naipaul effectively portrays the psychological angst that characterizes all displaced people.

Future researchers may work on irony, humour and symbol in the novels of Naipaul or on the problem of fragmentary identity in the context of postcolonialism or a Comparative study between Naipaul and one of the Diasporic writers like Chinua Achebe.