CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

General Perspectives:

Literature is a manifestation of the cultural, social, political and spiritual growth of a nation which embodies the long-cherished and the deep-rooted traditions, a comprehensive perception of the changing aspects of life and true reality of a nation. The greatest value of literature is its capacity to acquaint man with the forces which motivate him to locate his place in the society and in the world. Therefore, human feelings, experiences, ideas, joys, passions, sorrows and struggles form the core of literary art.

Postcolonial Literature, which is written in English in former colonies, represents the colonial time as well as the time after colonisation. It is the emergence of new consciousness of thought and self-expression which came into existence around the middle of the 20th century which covers up the dangerous period of the people’s lives and reflects the disillusionment that troubles the two world war generations and the deep spiritual isolation of man in the universe. It is a result of the interaction between “imperial culture and the complex indigenous practices . . . imperial language and local experience” (Ashcroft et al. Postcolonial Studies Reader 1).

Fragmentation, alienation and exile are common terms associated with postcolonial literature. Imperialism played a key role in bringing a sense of alienation and disorder to the countries where imperialists ruled. The postcolonial Third World is not a homogeneous one; there are still enslaved people found there, others who are still fighting to attain sovereignty and those who have obtained complete freedom, still live under the constant menace of imperialist aggression.
Colonial powers came to foreign states and destroyed main parts of native tradition and culture. Furthermore, they continuously replaced them with their own ones. The basic idea of this process is nothing but the deconstruction of old-fashioned perceptions and attitudes of power and oppression that were adopted during the time of colonialism. This often led to conflicts when countries became independent, and the colonised people suddenly faced the challenge of developing a new nationwide identity and self-confidence. Thus, postcolonialism marks the end of colonialism by giving the indigenous people the necessary authority and political freedom to choose their place and gain independence by overcoming political and cultural imperialism.

Postcolonial literature develops “the national identity in the wake of colonial rule” (Domnic 79). It deals with the colonised people’s response to the colonial legacy by writing back to the centre. The indigenous people start to write their own histories and legacies using the coloniser’s language. Therefore, “the study of colonial discourse . . . blossomed into a garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken, even spoke for” (Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* 56).

The field of Postcolonial studies has been gaining prominence since 1970s. Some would date its rise in the Western academy from the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) which keeps the spheres of coloniser and colonised. The experience of colonisation and the challenges of a postcolonial world have produced an explosion of new writing in English. This diverse and powerful body of literature has established a specific practice of postcolonial writing in India, Australia, Canada and West Indies and has challenged both the traditional canon and dominant ideas of literature and culture.

Postcolonial writing can serve as both cultural decolonisation of the habits, views and assumptions of British colonialism and as part of the newly independent nation’s building of its own separate identity and revival of its ethnic cultures, traditions, beliefs
and languages. It can thus be both part of the struggle for independence and the creation of a new national identity when that country is freed from British Empire. The very act of writing is to establish their individual identity independent of their coloniser and to try to show that they have not only gained independence from the latter but has also successfully made the coloniser’s language a vehicle for creative expression. The result is that English literature has been transformed from English to other varieties of English such as African English, Australian English, Canadian English, Caribbean English, Indian English etc.

Located in the metropolitan West, the postcolonial writers tend to recreate the contemporary social milieu and cultural crisis in their native land and attempt to redefine it in the emerging postcolonial context. They mix the past, the present, the future and the imperial and the colonial cultures in their fiction, where they explore the residual effects of foreign domination in the political, social and economic spheres. Dispossession, cultural fragmentation, colonial and neo-colonial power structures, political corruption, cultural degeneration and the crisis of identity are some of the major preoccupations in their writing.

Postcolonial writers reject the colonialist ideology of superiority and containment, disassociate themselves from cultural imperialism and celebrate the indigenous culture and identity in all forms and shapes, to assert the native identity and culture. They also touch upon the issues of mimicry, assimilation and hybridity experienced by the natives. Some of the best known names in postcolonial literature and theory are those of Chinua Achebe, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Buchi Emecheta, Frantz Fanon, Jamaica Kincaid, Salman Rushdie, Wole Soynika and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Displacement and fragmentation of identity are the common grounds of postcolonial writing which have been popularised by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, “the Holy Trinity” (Young, *White Mythologies: Writing*)
History and the West 163) of postcolonial critics, who have achieved the greatest eminence in their field.

The first major theoretical account of postcolonial text, The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, has popularised the term ‘postcolonial’ and investigated the powerful forces acting on language in the postcolonial discourse. Ashcroft et al. use the term ‘postcolonial’, “to discover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day” (Postcolonial Studies Reader 2). They also identify the common characteristics of postcolonial literatures:

What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they 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 assumption of the imperial center. It is this which makes them distinctively postcolonial. (Postcolonial Studies Reader 2)

Further, the growing popularity of the word ‘postcolonial’, which refers to the period after official decolonisation, has an enormous amount of weighty baggage. It has been organised to replace what earlier went under the names of ‘Third World’ or ‘Commonwealth’ literature to describe colonial discourse analysis. As the term grows in popularity, it consumes specific heterogeneous interests.

Homi Bhabha, one of the most important figures in contemporary Postcolonial Studies, explores the colonial and postcolonial theory, cultural change and political power in his works. According to Bhabha, “The term postcolonial is increasingly used to describe the form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once-colonized
Bhabha has also made a major contribution to postcolonial studies by pointing out how there is always ambivalence at the site of colonial dominance. To him, colonialism is not only a straightforward oppression, domination and violence, but also, a period of complex and varied cultural contact and interaction. Similarly, for him, colonialism is marked by an economy of identity in which coloniser and colonised depend on each other. Bhabha’s work demonstrates the ambivalent attitude of the colonisers between hatred and longing for the natives, which needs to be challenged. His *The Location of Culture* (1994) and *Nation and Narration* (1995) are landmarks in the field of postcolonial theory. In *The Location of Culture*, he explains the mass migrations in the latter half of the twentieth century and reflects the migrant’s predicament.

Another postcolonial critic, Frantz Fanon talks of the psychological aspects of colonialism in his well known works *Black Skin White Masks* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1990). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon reinterprets materialism and existentialism and employs psychoanalytic methods to explore the colonised people’s psyche. In *The Wretched of the Earth* he visualises the liberation of Third World countries.

The postcolonial writing has also produced highly visible diasporic discourse. Diaspora writing directly reflects the immigrant experience that comes out of immigrant settlement. The clash between the past and the present, the two generations, concern for root and rootlessness, native and new land, singular and multi-culture and such trend continues in all diasporic discourse. Edward Said is eloquent in his praise of the nomadic energies of migrant writers, whom he sees as transgressing “the confinement of both imperial and provincial orthodoxies” (Gandhi 153).
Diaspora, the generally violent and compulsory migration of people from their homeland to other regions, is a central event in colonisation, which involve millions of people who have voluntarily displaced themselves from Europe and Asia to work chiefly in the United States, Canada, Africa, Australia and South America. It may also mean the enforced dislocation of millions of Indians and Africans as slaves, to the plantations of Central and South America and the south of the United States. These two great areas, with their ever-increasing demand of labour, were developed as plantation colonies to furnish foodstuffs and raw material for the metropolitan population. In fact, for more than three hundred years, the economy of America was exclusively based on the work of slaves brought from West Africa.

The severing of people from their homeland, their culture and language causes loss of identity followed by a deep effort to appropriate, transform and merge local cultures with their own traditional ones. Descendants of the diaspora develop their own distinctive cultures, although they preserve and extend their original cultures. These hybrid cultures question the myth of the European pure culture and check the idealisation of nativism and the mandatory return to pre-colonial cultures. Stuart Hall in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” aptly explains, “When I was growing up in the 1940s and 1950s as a child in Kingston, I was surrounded by the signs, the music and the rhythms of this Africa of the diaspora, which only existed as a result of a long and discontinuous series of transformations” (231).

Writers of the Diaspora, who were earlier called the expatriate writers, have carved a special place in the field of postcolonial literature, explored major issues like cultural conflicts, exile, alienation, immigration, politics, psyche and changing social value. The distance from the country of origin encourages them to step on a novel
ground exploring new themes and forms, breaking taboos existing in their home
countries and developing new ideas. It has become a universal phenomenon.

Postcolonial literature reflects the general disillusionment that harasses the two post war
generations and the deep spiritual isolation felt by men in a universe which he himself
feels to be inconsequential and strange.

As a Diasporic writer, Naipaul has made significant contribution to Postcolonial
literature and has secured a prominent place in the English-speaking world. His works
bring to light the social, political and psychological issues in the Third World countries
by recalling the social and cultural upliftment. Naipaul is a product of Trinidad’s
colourful history of migration, dislocation and cultural change. In the New York Times
Review of Books, Joan Didion describes him as “the Indian not an Indian, the
Trinidadian not a Trinidadian, the Englishman never an Englishman” (5). Naipaul
denounced his Caribbean roots; he escaped to England for 50 years, but reluctantly
accepted knighthood in 1990; he travelled extensively in India, but vehemently criticised
its people and their culture. Hence, his works illustrate a lifelong search for personal
identity within an ever-changing and ever-expanding world.

**Major Postcolonial Writers:**

Some of the notable postcolonial writers such as Anita Desai, Arun Joshi,
Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Nayantara Sahgal, Vikram Seth, Jhumpa Lahiri,
Rohinton Mistry, Uma Parameswaran, Amitav Ghosh, M. G. Vassanji, Shyam
Selvadurai, Neil Bissoondath and George Lamming write about exile, crisis of identity,
homelessness, rootlessness, cultural, racial, social and political conflicts. Like them,
Naipaul has explored the predicament of the exile, the pain of homelessness, loss of
roots and the crisis and conflicts in the life of contemporary human beings. Living in
distant land these writers cannot divorce their relationship with their earlier social milieus. Edward Said in *Orientalism* explains it as a man made historical process:

> Men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities to say nothing of historical entities, such locals, regions, geographical sectors as ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ are man-made. Therefore as much as the west itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other. (5)

African writers Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *An Arrow of God* (1964); Wole Soyinka in *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), *The Lion and the Jewel* (1962) and *The Road* (1965); and C. L. R. James in *The Black Jacobins* (1963) vividly show the suffering of the colonial people and their struggle to be free from it.

Most of these novelists write from an explicitly anti-colonialist perspective and seek to explore the effects of imperialism on the countries of their origin. The general characteristics of these writers have been the subtlety of immigrant awareness. It is indisputable that any author’s personal experience is in one way or other an inspiration for spelling out imagination. The persons and events which come into contact directly or indirectly appeal to imaginative thinking. Therefore, immigration and the bi-products of immigration are detectable in the works of these writers.

Anita Desai, one of the pioneering postcolonial writers, began her publishing career in the 1960s with *Cry, the Peacock* (1965) and *Voices in the City* (1965). Since the beginning of her career as a novelist, Desai has carved a prominent place for her works. She is known for the exposure of realities by exploring the psyche of the
character with natural beauty. She depicts the social, political, religious and economic diversity in the contemporary world. Throughout her novels and short stories, Desai focuses on the personal struggles of Anglicised, middle-class women in contemporary India as they attempt to overcome the societal limitations imposed by a tradition-bound patriarchal culture.

Arun Joshi emphasises his own diasporic experience and the imprints of western domination in his writing. His novels, probing into existentialism along with the ethical choices, won him huge critical appreciation in India. Most of his writings are filled with his personal experiences right from his youth. One thing is clear that all the works of Joshi centre on the twin aspects of ‘conflict’ and ‘self-identity’ which are interwoven and inseparable. His *The Foreigner* (1968) is a story of a young man who is detached, almost estranged and feels alien wherever he goes or lives. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971) is a thought provoking novel which defines the normal and the abnormal, the ordinary and the extraordinary, and the illusion and reality in the life of Billy Biswas.

Amitav Ghosh, like many of his contemporaries has been immensely influenced by the political and cultural milieu of post-independent India. His first novel *The Circle of Reason* (1986) provides interesting glimpses of various facets of the Nationalist movement. His next novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988) provides ideological resistance to totalising political discourse and presents an entire cross-section of society which is affected by war. *In an Antique Land* (1992) is a blend of fact and fiction which brings the memory of his childhood experience of riots in Dhaka and the present predicament of Iraqi war of 1990. *The Glass Palace* (2000) is an epic novel which is set in Burma during the British invasion and grasps the rise and fall of empires across the twentieth century. His *Sea of Poppies* (2008) summarises the colonial history of the East. The
incidents in his novels show clear pictures of the burden of history, and unethical and unscrupulous politicians. Through his novels he suggests that the politics of the nations of the sub-continent is inseparable.

An Indo-American novelist and short-story writer, Bharati Mukherjee, focuses on the “phenomenon of migration, the status of new immigrants, and the feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates” (Alam 7). Her works feature not only cultural clashes but also of violence. Her first novel *The Tiger’s Daughter* (1971), tells the story of a sheltered Indian woman jolted by immersion in American culture, then again shocked by her return to a violent Calcutta. Her next novel *Wife* (1975), details the descent into madness of an Indian woman trapped in New York City by the fears and passivity resulting from her upbringing.

Another writer who has very sincere concern for the problem of roots and identity is Salman Rushdie. In *Midnight’s Children* (1980), he illustrates the permanent plight of individual identity in the hostile modern world, dislocates time and place, mixes the past, present and future, and shifts perspectives and narrative voices to give several versions of the subcontinent’s postcolonial history. In *Shame* (1983), he offers a fantasised interpretation of the degenerated postcolonial society that denies freedom and justice to women. His *Midnight’s Children* is commonly read as a national allegory and it highlights the politics and the complex networks of transcultural relationship between individuals and history.

Nayantara Sahgal, an Indian journalist and novelist presents the personal crises of individuals during India’s freedom struggle. Her novel *Rich like Us* (1985) confronts civil disorder, corruption, and oppression while detailing the internal conflicts in a businessman’s family. It is a historical and political novel which is set in New Delhi.
during the chaotic time between 1932 and the mid1970s, which follows the lives of two female protagonists, Rose and Sonali, and their fight to live in a time of political upheaval and social re-organisation.

Vikram Seth, poet, novelist and travel writer is known for his verse novel *The Golden Gate* (1986) and his epic novel *A Suitable Boy* (1993). While *The Golden Gate* is about young professionals in San Francisco who search for love and identity, *A Suitable Boy* is about diasporic loss and deals with the repossession of immediate postcolonial history.

Jhumpa Lahiri is yet another writer who voices diasporic sensibility in her *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999). Settled abroad, she nuances of cultural interactions, native consciousness, imposed lifestyle, human despair, psychic dilemma, loneliness, unsolved crisis etc. Like most of the diasporic fiction, Lahiri engages herself in exposing the conflict of culture, maladjustment, loneliness, sexual adventures and urgency of a home with final resolution.

Uma Parameswaran has devoted much of her writing to create an identifiable South Asian Canadian diaspora. Her *Dear Deedi, My Sister* (1989) describes the life and hardships of immigrants in Canada through a variety of characters and the letters written between Sapna in Canada and her sister in India. The burdens are different, but the pain is the same. In *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees* (1998), Parameswaran’s subject matter moves to the new generation of Indo-Canadians—children of immigrants raised in Canada.

M. G. Vassanji, one of Canada’s most acclaimed writers, examines how the lives of his characters are affected by the migration. He looks at the relation among the Indian community, the native Africans and the colonial administration. He is concerned with the effects of history and the interaction between personal and public histories. The
colonial history of Kenya and Tanzania serves as the backdrop for much of his work. His first novel, *The Gunny Sack* (1980) is about Indians in Africa, in which he scrutinises the themes of identity, displacement and race. The next novel *No New Land* (1991), is set in Toronto, and portrays a group of Indians from Tanzania trying to adapt to life in a new land and manifests the reconstruction of the past to a preoccupation with the present. His *Amriika* (1999) is a noteworthy novel which presents a vibrant tale in the form of a memoir of an Afro-Asian immigrant in America. However, in *The Assassin’s Song* (2007), he tackles Indian folk culture and myths.

Another famous Indo-Canadian writer, Rohinton Mistry portrays political, communal and personal tension which leaves impression on the readers. In his works, Mistry explores the relationships at the heart of the Parsi community, their cultural identity and the uniqueness of their community living. At the same time, Mistry seeks to shed light and indeed fully embrace the syncretic nature of the diasporic Parsi experience whether in North America or in India. His collection of short stories *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) and his novel *Such a Long Journey* (1991) are socio-cultural goldmines. His *Tales from Firozsha Baag* presents the smiles and tears, bickering and blessings of a whole life of Parsi Indians in Canada. His *Family Matters* (2002) is on old age malady flanked by communal and political upheaval. In his novels, he depicts the Indian socio-economic and political life as well as Parsi Zoroastrian life, customs, beliefs and religion. His characters develop from particular to general, depicting their peculiarities, follies and foibles, from individual to family and gradually widening into the social, cultural and political world.

The famous Sri Lankan-Canadian novelist, Shyam Selvadurai in *The Hungry Ghosts* (2013), explains how racial, political and sexual differences can tear apart both a country and the human heart. He also depicts the socio-economic, racial and religious
tension in Sri Lanka. Selvadurai recounted an account of the discomfort he and his partner experienced during a period spent in Sri Lanka in 1997 in his essay “Coming Out” which was published in *Time Asia*’s special issue on the Asian Diaspora in 2003.

Neil Divendra Bissoondath, nephew of V. S. Naipaul, is an Indo-Canadian immigrant writer and an expert in carving personal strife inside a framework of political violence. His short story collections *Digging up the Mountains* (1987) and *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows* (1991), are set on a Caribbean island that has lately gained its independence. His first novel *A Casual Brutality* (1989) is again established in an agitated Caribbean nation. The cultural conflict of the immigrant is established in his second novel *The Innocence of Age* (1993). In his non-fiction *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (1994), he criticises the 1971 Multiculturalism Act for emphasising differences rather than similarities amongst the country’s various ethnic groups. Moreover, his writings demonstrate an amalgamation of the exotic and the familiar, focusing on the themes of marginalisation and alienation.

George Lamming, one of the most highly regarded contemporary Caribbean writers, writes about the decolonisation and reconstruction of the West Indies following the end of British colonial rule. His writing focuses on finding new political and social identity and the long-lasting effects of early colonialism in the minds and actions of the Caribbean people. Each of his novels is a continually developing vision linked to the changing political scene in the Caribbean with its urgent problems of political and psychological decolonisation. His writings shift between many different geographical and cultural spaces: the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and North America, and exposing its legacies in social, political and artistic dimensions. In his collection of essays *Pleasures of Exile* (1960) he attempts to define the place of the West Indian in the postcolonial world, where he remarks that “The pleasure and paradox of my own exile is that I belong where I am. My role, it seems, has rather to do with time and change rather than
with the geography of circumstances . . .” (56). Lamming’s writing inverts the hierarchy of national and political values inaugurated by the binary thinking that informs imperialist politics. He focuses on Caribbean history in order to form a critique of both imperialism and decolonisation as well as to expose the material oppression suffered by the majority of the population. Hence, though Naipaul and Lamming explore the history of the Caribbean their readings/interpretations of it differ.

Naipaul, a realist and one of the prose stylists of postcolonial era, occupies a coveted place among the most celebrated postcolonial writers in interrogating realities of postcolonial Third World. He has emerged as a global personality “navigating civilisations and literary forms” (Bhat, “Civilization, History and V. S. Naipaul’s Fiction” 52). He covers the Caribbean islands, Africa, India, the Middle East and England and portrays the postcolonial Third World countries passing from a stage of colonial Feudalism to twentieth century Capitalism. His works are perhaps his greatest achievements, as they, in a sense, chart the course of his departure from the restrictive background of the Caribbean Island to the open cosmopolitan culture of the world. Bhaskar and Shukla in their Critical Study of Post-Colonial Literature elucidate:

The world Naipaul sees is of course no void at all: it is a world dense with physical and social phenomena, brutally alive with the complications and contradictions of actual human endeavour . . . This world of Naipaul’s is in fact charged with what can only be described as a romantic view of reality, an almost unbearable tension between the idea and the physical fact. (232)

**Life and Career of V. S. Naipaul:**

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, popularly known as V. S. Naipaul, was born on 17th August 1932 in the Lion House of Chaguanas in central Trinidad as the second child of Seepersad Naipaul and Droapatie Capildeo. He is the son, older brother, uncle
and cousin of published authors Seepersad Naipaul, Shiva Naipaul, Neil Bissoondath and Vahni Capildeo, respectively. He is the grandson of an illiterate indentured labourer who left Ballia which is situated in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, India, to work on the British sugarcane plantations in Trinidad in 1900s. This migration of his grandfather, thousands of miles away from India to a strange land, resulted in Naipaul’s quest for identity and thus he became an exile in the country of his birth which haunts his fiction time and again. Therefore, he grew up in a British plantation colony in the Caribbean as a third generation Indian migrant.

After having completed his schooling at the Tranquility Boys School in Port of Spain and winning a scholarship, Naipaul joined Queen’s Royal College where he studied from 1943 to 1948 and University College of Oxford from 1950 to 1954. Obtaining B.A, he went to London and worked as an Editor of “Caribbean Voices” for the BBC Caribbean Service during 1954-56 and a Fiction Reviewer in The New Statesman during 1957-61. His father, Seepersad Naipaul, was the primary motivating force in Naipaul’s literary career. Peter Hughes in V. S. Naipaul rightly states, “Naipaul’s mysterious ambition would seem to have been his attempt to redeem in his own life, his father’s mostly thwarted hopes for a writer’s career and the sufferings of his last years” (39). Patricia Ann Hale, a former fellow-Oxford student, whom Naipaul married in 1995, served as first reader, editor and critic of his writings until her death.

At the young age of eleven, Naipaul was drawn towards writing. He calls it as “a settled ambition” (Reading and Writing: A Personal Account 3). In an interview he tells, “I wanted to be very famous. I also wanted to be a writer: to be famous for writing. And the absurdity about the ambition at the time was that I had no idea what I was going to write about” (Tejpal 1). For him writing was a supreme art and “a fantasy of nobility”
Finding the Centre: Two Narratives 38). He has authored over 30 works of fiction and non-fiction and also writes essays, book reviews and articles for newspapers and magazines. His works gained international acclaim and were also translated into a few other languages. They are mainly about Americans, Germans, Indians, Irishmen, Italians, Japanese, Russians and West Indians. In his Nobel Prize lecture, he rightly says, “Everything of value about me is in my books . . . I am the sum of my books” (Ray, “Two Worlds: Nobel Lecture December 7, 2001” 2).

As a writer, Naipaul is endowed with commendable craftsmanship, extraordinary brilliance and versatility. His works give him a popular international readership, chiefly because of his ironic perspective on contemporary life. His clarity of vision is remarkable as he has enjoyed his life in a century which is marked by political upheaval, colonisation, migration and revolution.

To find out the subject matter for his works, Naipaul has travelled throughout Africa, Argentina, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Uruguay, Zaire and so on, and has written down what he has observed from his travel. Hence, his experiences have been a recurrent source of all his works and his fiction and non-fiction project his life in a different dimension. He studies modern man’s predicament and his psyche and gives his study the shape of novel. His characters mirror him in many ways. He seems not to have written only for entertainment, but also with a view of sharing his own experiences with his readers.

Naipaul draws his inspiration from sharply recalled childhood experiences and from the upheavals of migrants. In The Return of Eva Peron he rightly states, “Facts can be realigned. But fiction never lies; it reveals the writer totally” (67). He has used fiction not only as a way of chronicling life but also as an instrument of analysis. They acquire
“three dimensional structures - historical, social and psychological” (R. A. Singh 2).

Through his novels, he has tried his best to project the rootless or homeless individuals.

To this point Keith Garebian in an article “V. S. Naipaul’s Negative Sense of Place” comments:

Naipaul explores landscapes in order to provide characters with a real home, a true place of belonging so that they will not continue to be homeless wanderers, unsure of themselves and their fates. But the mythology of the land is tinged with embarrassment, nervousness, hysteria and pessimism all products in some way of Naipaul’s own history as a colonial with an ambiguous identity. (23-24)

The actual experiences of Naipaul have been a recurrent source of all his works. He has written with a view of sharing his own experiences with his readers. His imagination transcends all limits and his themes acquire universal significance. His novels deal with the fragmentation of the social order, the meaningfulness of serious efforts and the ridiculousness of the modern world. They take the readers into the farthest reaches of the Third World countries like that of Africa, Asia, India, South Africa and West Indies. They are difficult and challenging not because they are obscure, but because they reflect a keen realistic vision of the novelist. His vision posits an essential texture of mimicry glaringly visible in the postcolonial society. Exile, alienation and displacement, effects of colonialism and chaos of postcolonialism in Third World societies are some of his major themes. Moreover, he explains the problems of the postcolonial world, his life history and his own experiences in a confessional way.

By employing variety of literary idioms, Naipaul describes the bitter legacy of colonialism on personal, political and societal levels. He has the telescopic sight of the
“unattached observer, who is not only a creative observer, even an observer of genius, but one in whom the observation of others leads to analysis of self” (Walsh 15). In awarding Nobel Prize, the Swedish Academy praises Naipaul for “having united perspective narrative and incorruptible scrutiny in works that compel us to see the presence of suppressed histories” (Ray, “Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001” 1). In his fiction Naipaul studies the history of nations, social and political subjugation, domination, diaspora and displacement, and the existential problems of his characters in their in-betweeness and mobilisation without readiness to accept the psychological crisis caused by historical wounds. He places his characters in complex circumstances and finds the reason for their fragmentation not in the present but in the dark past and unambiguous future. Therefore, his characters and thematic interrogations are based on the dark realities of postcolonial societies.

In spite of his parent’s Hindu heritage, Naipaul struggles to form spiritual connections with it and this cultural conflict dominates almost all his works. He seems to have a very complex personality: firstly, he is an Indian uprooted from the land of his ancestors; secondly, he is a West Indian by his birth; finally, he lives in London because of his self-exile. Obviously these are the factors largely responsible for the shaping of his personality and in the making of his mind. He settled in England, because England is a convenient home for him.

Though feeling at home in England, a country Naipaul has lived for years, he thinks that he knows so little about England. He frequently mourns the fact that he is a writer without a country and a society. He expresses his agony in The Overcrowded Barracoon, “The American do not want me because I am too British. The public do not want me because I am too foreign . . . I live in England and depend on an English
audience. Yet I write about Trinidad and more particularly the Indian community . . . .

Yet I like London. For all the reason I have given it is the best place to write in” (16).

Also, he admits, “But now I feel I can never hope to know as much about people here as I do about Trinidad Indian” (14). He himself has been under no illusion about his accommodation in England which he had fictionalised in *The Mimic Men, The Enigma of Arrival, A Bend in the River* and *Half a Life*.

Long years of his residence in England and his writing in English has not made Naipaul an English novelist, but labels him as a West Indian writer. Though he left the island (Caribbean) for London in search of recognition and response, his literary themes have continued to rest in the portrayal of his native society (Trinidad). His powerful mastery over the language and his vision helped him to add new dimensions to the West Indian novel, but his literary domain has extend far beyond the West Indian island of Trinidad which now encompasses Africa, America, India and England.

The fictional world of Naipaul put forward the clash between the alienated self and the socio-cultural forces. His fictions reveal his deep preoccupation with the changing African social and political scene. They can be considered as a link between the real and imaginary world. They are the product of multidimensional exposure to different cultures, races and societies in transition. They are almost the imaginative equivalent of the ritual of sacrifice enabling art to fill the role of social action. In an interview with Adrian Rowe-Evans, Naipaul says, “. . . through my writing, through the effort honestly to respond, I have begun to have ideas about the world. I have begun to analyse. First of all, the deficiencies of the society from which I came; and then, through that, what goes to make this much more complex society in which I have worked so
long” (48). His vision has never faltered, indeed it has widened with the sense of urgency and immediacy moving into other cultures and other lands.

The fiction of Naipaul can be considered as a tracing of link between the actual and the artistic world of the writer, and deal with the facts of confrontation between the Third and First World in the colonial and postcolonial situations from 1950s. They are often highly autobiographical, returning again and again to the themes of alienation, the burdens of the past and the confusion of the present. Some of his novels are based on social, political and racial discriminations and his recurring themes are alienation, identity, exile, rootlessness, Caribbean history, Indian ancestry, slavery, displacement, guerrillas, and social and political conflicts.

Moreover, his novels reveal his deep concern with the changing social and political scene in which he records the inner workings of the minds of his characters and their personal and social conflicts. He has presented the plight of Indian immigrants and their descendants in Trinidad where his treatment of the issue is exhaustive and can be found in most of his novels, because, the ties of nativity can never be separated, as he says, “I do not think one can ever abandon one’s allegiance to one’s community or at any rate to the idea of one’s community” (Joshi 91). Hence, his idea of his community constitutes a deeply felt account of the Indian immigrant’s struggle to find them in a totally alien world.

Naipaul’s works are set in many places and explore many themes, but he is best known for his depictions of Trinidad, where he was born and reared; for his explorations of modern-day India, his ancestral land and for his bleak, unsparing portraits of postcolonial societies in Africa, Asia, South America, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and England. He is unhappy about the cultural and spiritual poverty of
Trinidad. Seema Srivastava and Poornima Anil in their article “The Problem of Home and Identity in V. S. Naipaul’s Novels” aptly remark that, for Naipaul, Trinidad was a “destitute society, without history, without achievement” (215).

Naipaul’s earlier writing is to a large extent an attempt at defining his own situation and seeking an answer to the problem that hampered him at the start. His novels which span the period from 1950s to 1980s are vivid picture of the postcolonial societies of the Caribbean islands. His early novels and short stories based on his own experiences in Trinidad have been acclaimed for their narrative skill and colourful use of West Indian dialect as they express themes of individual rootlessness and cultural deprivation that are the effects of colonial history. His novels, notably Guerrillas, A Bend in the River, A House for Mr. Biswas, The Mimic Men, A Way in the World and Half a Life combine autobiographical themes of his own search for identity and community with his more overarching themes of historical anarchy and chaos caused by colonialism.

Naipaul’s Works:

Naipaul’s first novel The Mystic Masseur (1957) is set in the Port of Spain and the rural area of Trinidad where the Indians lived and worked. The life of the first generation of East Indians after the termination of indentureship is vividly portrayed in this novel. The novel is complex and directly satirical. It is a comic study of life in Trinidad, in the face of the postcolonial rise of politics. It describes the career of an imaginative islander who rises through a series of failures as a teacher, writer, masseur, politician and then ultimately a disillusioned M.B.E. (Member of the British Empire). The central concern of the narrative while emphasising this aspect centers round the sudden rise and metamorphosis of the protagonist, Ganesh who is Naipaul’s first hero
and has the virtues of all Naipaul’s best characters. Ganesh has an awareness of the world, intelligence, a sense of humour, an endlessly inventive and sustaining imagination. Through Ganesh, Naipaul expresses his views on the contemporary society.

The second novel *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958) deals with the misadventures of politicians in the rural island’s election campaigns. It deals mainly with a successful campaign by a Trinidadian Hindu, Harbans, to win the election as a candidate from Elvira (a small village in Trinidad). It cannot be taken as a serious and realistic reflection of a colonial society, but as a humorous blow up of human flaws and fads.

The third novel *Miguel Street* (1959) is seen through the eyes of a fatherless boy growing up in Port of Spain, Trinidad, during World War II. It conveys the realities of the urban world of colonial Trinidad and offers a complete picture of a typical picaroon society with no set standard and norms for living.

Naipaul, after an initial period of anonymity, built an enormous reputation for himself with the publication of *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) which is a sort of ‘fictional biography’ of his father Seepersad Naipaul. Regarded as his masterpiece, the novel traces the struggle of Mr. Biswas to own a house which he ultimately acquires, but his premature death has a touch of tragedy about it. The story captures authentic West Indian life and transcends regional boundaries which are universal in their human implications.

The novel *Mr. Stone and the Knight’s Companion* (1963) describes how Mr. Stone initiates a project to salvage his life, and fails because another man reaps the benefit of that project. Naipaul here retains his familiar themes of individual isolation and of man’s need to find himself.
The next novel *The Mimic Men* (1967) marks an important landmark in the literary career of Naipaul. The novel presents the condition of a new independent country in the Caribbean, the island of Isabella and projects before us the condition of the people in the postcolonial era. The novel attempts to explore the ways in which the conscious individual in a given society establishes modes of mediation between himself and his experience. Also, it is a vision of ‘disorder’, ‘placelessness’ and break down of human relationship in the world of the ‘mimic men’. It depicts the plight of a colonial politician who is suspended between the island of his birth and the cosmopolitan world and feels shipwrecked first on his native island, then in England. Naipaul might have “called this novel, ‘Hollow Men’ if T. S. Eliot had not already used this title for one of his poems” (Lall 11).

The novel *Guerrillas* (1975) deals with social and political unrest which creates tensions and renders life hollow and aimless in a Caribbean island after its independence. The characters of this novel abuse each other with more violence than in any of Naipaul’s previous works.

*A Bend in the River* (1979) pessimistically examines the uncertain future of a newly independent state in Central Africa and acknowledges the corruptibility of human heart. The setting of the novel resembles Congo or Zaire of the sixties to a certain extent, because Naipaul gathered material for this novel during his visit to Zaire in 1965. His article in the *New York Review of Books* provides much insight into *A Bend in the River* where he discusses how the original inhabitants of Africa lost their identity not because of encounter with forces of nature but because of their contact with the forces of civilisation.
The Enigma of Arrival (1987) is a collection of memoirs of Naipaul’s arrival in England and finding himself as a writer where he brings out different sets of people to show the nature and inter-relationship of different invaders and aboriginals.

A Way in the World (1994) is a sequence of biographies, where Naipaul is concerned with the mystery behind his characters’ ancestry. Characters in this novel are selected from his past and their pathos are elegantly described, rearranged and picked up again with a technical brilliance.

Half a Life (2001), one of the “truly outstanding works of literature, in the classical sense” (Moore 1), evaluates the lives of the people of mixed descent in three countries – India, England and Portuguese Africa, and their struggle to discover their identities. Partly autobiographical, the novel delineates the traumas of a troubled past, attempting to find some meaning and purpose of life. It projects the Indian socio-political turmoil during independence. A major theme running through the novel is that of modern man’s half-life.

Magic Seeds (2004) picks up where Half a Life left off. At the age of forty, the protagonist abandons his nomadic lifestyle with the encouragement of his sister to join an underground movement in India, but seven years of revolutionary campaigns and several years in jail convince him to return to England, where he once again uncovers the fruit of another unexpected social revolution.

Naipaul’s collections of short stories A Flag on the Island (1967) and In a Free State (1971) are seen by critics as some of the finest expression of the dilemmas and struggles of colonised people striving to make both their individual and social lives meaningful in a postcolonial context. A Flag on the Island is a collection of eleven short stories in which the stories are well made and are cast in the conventional mould. In a Free State is an autobiographical travel narrative with two short stories and a novella
based on his experiences in Africa and Caribbean. It treats the lives of immigrants as they try to assimilate to new environments exploring the problems that arise because of their own limitations as well as larger societal trends of racial discrimination and cruelty.

Naipaul has spent much of his life travelling around the world, seeking answers to his questions. From 1970’s until the present, Naipaul has continued to use travel as an inspiration for his non-fiction. He has an aspiration to travel all over the world like Ulysses. He is compared with the great travellers like that of Marco Polo and Amerigo Vespucci. Through his restless travels around the world he has written unforgettable books, but his travel has not given him any sense of belonging. He says, “Fiction, the exploration of one’s immediate circumstances, had taken me a lot off the way. Travel had taken me further” (Reading and Writing: A Personal Account 31). His experience in Trinidad, England and the countries he has visited, depicts the “migrations, dissatisfaction and restlessness, and the cultural and social changes of the nations” (Qasim 628). His frequent visits to India prove his longing for identity. From his travelling experience he gets the knowledge of men and manners, culture and community, civilised and uncivilised way of life.

**Awards and Prizes:**

During his literary career of about 80 years, Naipaul has won many coveted awards, “There remains hardly a literary award that has not come his way” (Joshi xiv). He received John Lewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1958 for his first novel *The Mystic Masseur*; Somerset Maugham Award in 1961 for *The Miguel Street*; Phoenix Trust Award in 1962; The Hawthornden Prize in 1964 for *Mr. Stone and the Night’s Companion*; W. H. Smith Award in 1968 for *The Mimic Men*; Arts Council Grant in 1969, Booker Prize in 1971, Bennett Award in 1980, Jerusalem Prize in 1983, T. S. Eliot Award in 1986, David Cohen British Award in 1993, Maharana Mewar Foundations
Col. James Tod Award in 2000 and the world’s most prestigious award, Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001 during the 100th year of the Nobel Prize. The awards he received are the tribute to “his noble vision of man’s struggle for freedom and liberty” (qtd. in Kamra 8).

Naipaul is an honorary doctor of St. Andrew’s College and Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. In 1990, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth for his literary achievements. More than that, he occupies a coveted place among the most celebrated twentieth century writers in exploring and interrogating post imperial issues. Thus, the concluding thought-provoking lines of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *Ulysses*, “to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield” (360) bears to the pressing hardships and the remarkable achievements of Naipaul.

**Criticism on Naipaul:**

Naipaul is famous for his controversial public proclamations, an attack on women writers and his conservative politics in relation to India. In an interview at the Royal Geographic Society in May 2011, Naipaul has expressed his view that women’s writings are inferior to men’s. He also has said that there is no female writer whom he would consider his equal. He has been attacked by critics for his open statement on women.

Criticism on Naipaul has been growing in all quarters – England, America and the Third World countries. Contributions by various scholars appear in numerous journals and periodicals from time to time. Naipaul’s works also figure prominently in world conferences on Commonwealth and West Indian Literature. Fourteen of his books have been translated and published in sixteen languages. The novel, *In a Free State* has been translated into eleven languages, *Guerrillas* into ten, and *A Bend in the River* into eight languages. About fifty post-graduate theses have been taken on Naipaul’s works.
during 1966-1986 at British and North American Universities. The University of the
West Indies and several Indian Universities too have produced theses on Naipaul’s
works. Similarly, his works have been seriously debated, discussed and analysed in
which critics have focused their critical attention on biographical and fictional
perspectives. Also, intellectual study on his works has been published in many critical
compilations.

Of course, critics have not been unanimous in their praise for him. They praise
him for his creative use of autobiography in his travel narratives and fiction. Amitav
Ghosh believes that among the Indian diasporic writers, “there are no finer writers
writing in the English language today than V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and A. K.
Ramanujan” (73). Karl Miller calls him “a high degree cosmopolitan writer” (Life and
Works of Booker Prize Winners 285). C. D. Narasimhaiah labels him as “conscience-
keeper of society” (215). Rob Nixon observes him as “the most talented, the most
truthful, the most honorable writer of his generation” (London Calling: V. S. Naipaul,
Postcolonial Mandarin 4). J. M. Coetzee describes Naipaul as “a master of modern
English prose” (8). Nicholas Mosley ponders Naipaul as, “a highly skilful writer” (25).
Irving Howe calls him “the world’s writer” (qtd. in Sathyananthan 31). Chinua Achebe
depicts Naipaul as “the modern Conrad” (28). In 2008, The Times ranked Naipaul
seventh on their list of “the 50 greatest British writers since 1945” (qtd. in Coetzee 8).
These are the real tributes to him.

Naipaul’s imagination seems not to extend beyond the despair of a fragmented
history. While Naipaul’s fellow Caribbean contemporaries such as Derek Walcott and
Wilson Harris approach the creolised and fragmented West Indies with a remarkable
humanism and liberalism, Naipaul remains interrogative of the authenticity of these
ideas. Though sharing similar locales, these Nobel Laureates inflect an unequivocal singularity of difference in their reading of the fractured, hybrid and unhistorical Caribbean societies into which they were born.

Critics reveal that Naipaul is more than merely a great stylist, his political and ideological position is made explicit in his prose of exceptional grace and lucidity, particularly the prose which mainly deals with the dilemma of the postcolonial societies. Naipaul’s generalisation reduces postcolonial societies of great complexity to merely those of “ridiculous mimicry, tyranny, or some combination of both” (Said, Reflections on Exile 102). Naipaul is praised for his exquisite mastery of English language by critics such as Irving Howe, Chinua Achebe, Derek Walcott and Salman Rushdie, but they are disappointed by his political and ideological position in his books.

According to critics, Naipaul’s novels are basically modelled on Victorian and Dickensian novels. Rob Nixon in London Calling: V. S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin rightly says, “Naipaul’s vision is trapped in a Victorian, imperialist vision of these Third World cultures” (110). Critics have always viewed Naipaul’s novels from a psychological point. They attack his treatment of fictional and non-fictional material ranging from the Caribbean to India. Mostly, Naipaul’s criticism should be seen in the background of his Indian ancestry. He wishes India well in his heart, but his writing comes with such heavy criticism that he is often accused by critics such as Edward Said, Salman Rushdie, Phillips and Nissim Ezekiel for his portrait of the Third World without sympathy, love and affection. To this point, Savitri Tripathi in “V. S. Naipaul’s Such a Long Journey in Search of Soil and Roots: A Study of Half a Life” aptly states that, “V. S. Naipaul speaks the truth without malice. There is honesty in his writings. He always writes about real things because he believes that the writer should not have any secret” (223).
Naipaul’s later writings arouse considerable controversy. Some critics accuse Naipaul of his prejudice against postcolonial countries. Edward Said criticises Naipaul for the way he benefits from the promotion of himself as an exile from the Third World and accuses him as a racist. Edward Said condemns Naipaul as a “native informer” (Wheatcroft 204). Along with Derek Walcott, Said accuses him of being a neo-colonial apologist. Naipaul, on the one hand, is acclaimed for his objective reports about the destruction of postcolonial societies by such admirers as John Lukacs and Irving Howe. Lukacs defends Naipaul as a truth-seeker, whose “principle concern is not with injustice, or justice, but with truth” (68). Howe compliments Naipaul on his faithfulness to “what he sees” and affirms that “few see as well as Naipaul” (“A Dark Vision, A Bend in the River” 37).

Nissim Ezekiel, an Indian poet, makes similar but less severe critique of Naipaul’s travel book, An Area of Darkness, where he agrees with Naipaul’s vivid description of “the grossness and squalor of Indian life, the routine ritualism, the lip-service to high ideals, the petrified and distorted sense of cleanliness, and a thousand other things” (201), but he doubts whether Naipaul “really meet[s] no decent Indians” (203) other than “grotesques, contemptible or pathetic creatures” (201). Despite these criticisms, Naipaul remains a fascinating figure in the contemporary postcolonial world.

**Review of Literature:**

Literary critics have reacted to Naipaul’s writings in a wide variety of manner. Right from William Walsh’s V. S. Naipaul, which was published in 1973, critics such as Anthony Boxill, Avadesh K. Srivastava, Bruce King, John Thieme, Kenneth Ramchand, Landeg White, Paul Theroux, Peter Hughes, Robert D. Hammer, Robert K. Morris to name a few have concentrated on some of the themes and issues in Naipaul’s fictions and non-fiction, particularly on the intellectual poverty, political and cultural

In Patrick French’s authorised biography of Naipaul *The World Is What It Is* (1988), one can find that Naipaul is just increasingly straightforward about his life. His forthrightness and his apparent lack of repentance cause discomforts. Chinua Achebe endeavours to reveal that Naipaul’s pompous and disdainful description of postcolonial societies suggests his unexamined nostalgia on the colonial order with the withdrawal of the colonisers the colonies are kept further away from civilisation which ends up in a state of anarchy and self-destruction. He points out that, Naipaul’s admiration for Western civilisation quickly leads Naipaul to “ridicule claims to any human achievement in Africa” (*Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* 88). William Walsh in his work *V. S. Naipaul* examines Naipaul’s art. Landeg White in *V. S. Naipaul: A Critical Introduction* concentrates on Naipaul’s background as the pivot of his works.

Rob Nixon and Selwyn Cudjoe, attribute Naipaul’s fundamental, social and cultural values to his psychological reactions. Cudjoe constructs Naipaul’s writings a psycho-political biography of the man. In his “Political Reading of Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men*” Cudjoe explains the inherent conflicts within the text itself. This study of the mimic men from the perspective of exile will suggest the text’s potential contribution to postcolonial concerns in a more positive way. In *V. S. Naipaul: A Materialist Reading* he examines Naipaul’s stand on political ideology. Rob Nixon, a former student of
Edward Said, presents the most recent vitriolic criticism of Naipaul’s oeuvre in his book, *London Calling: V. S. Naipaul: Postcolonial Mandarin*. Nixon proposes that Naipaul’s representation of Third World societies as “primitive”, “backward” and “mimetic” is a “limited idiom” (110). He also analyses the rhetorical strategies of Naipaul’s travel narratives for evidence of his commitment to “the idealized imperial England of his imaginings” (24).

American critics tend to be more circumspect. Paul Theroux, despite his subsequent personal estrangement from Naipaul, pays homage to his unique vision and innovativeness. In *V. S. Naipaul: An Introduction to his Work*, he discusses the creators, householders, travellers, the sense of past and Naipaul’s style. He also analyses the psychological crisis of the characters in *The Mystic Masseur, Mr. Stone and Knight’s Companion, A House for Mr. Biswas, The Mimic Men* and *The Suffrage of Elvira*, where he highlights the characters’ bewilderment at the time of other’s death and says that, “The fact of death stuns various of Naipaul’s characters into a mechanical bewilderment which is more fantasy than grief. It is almost as if grief is beyond them; they are not whole enough to experience true loss. Their sadness is compulsive utterance” (45).

Suman Gupta notes that Naipaul’s works are basically conservative, increasingly anti revolutionary and in understanding of human spirituality and society. Meenakshi Mukherjee in an article for *Frontline* regrets Naipaul’s inexact and vague portrayal of Indian and African realities in *Half a Life*. Madhusudana Rao in *Contrary Awareness: A Critical Study of the Novels of V. S. Naipaul* analyses Naipaul’s works and comes to the point that Naipaul depicts the deficiencies of ex-colonial societies in a dispassionate manner. Sudha Rai in *V. S. Naipaul: A Study in Expatriate Sensibility* examines Naipaul’s non-fictional works. Anthony Boxill in *V. S. Naipaul’s Fiction: In Quest of the Enemy* identifies a single theme in Naipaul’s works which he calls as ‘enemy’.
Avadesh K. Srivastava in “Alien Voice Perspectives on Commonwealth Literature” explicits the theme of exile in Naipaul’s works. John Thieme’s “The Web of Tradition: Uses of Allusion in V. S. Naipaul’s Fiction” and Peter Hughes’ *V. S. Naipaul* are notable criticisms on Naipaul. In his scholarly essay “Disorder within, Disorder without” R. S. Pathak finds a powerful expression of colonial consciousness in the writings of Naipaul. C. D. Narasimhaiah in his article “V. S. Naipaul: A Case of Bizarre Reputation” alludes, “Read in the total context of Naipaul’s writing, I fear it figures as freakish, as Naipaul in reverse, vicariously enjoying a kind of inverted snobbery” (220). In “V. S. Naipaul: A Split Sensibility” he attacks Naipaul for his lack of sympathy and concern for people in India.

Shashi Kamra in *The Novels of V. S. Naipaul* examines the political, social and personal realities in the novels of Naipaul where he states that Naipaul has succeeded in “tickling men’s minds by very compelling portrayals of men without identity and roots determined to survive at all costs to build a home” (39). Also he points out the resemblance and similarity of Naipaul’s novels with that of Dickens, Thackeray and Wells.

Bruce King in *V. S. Naipaul* notes that “Naipaul’s novels differ from most European and American fiction in portraying romantic love and sexual freedom as destructive, a dereliction of one’s duties. The perspective is Indian, rather than European” (31). While touching on the controversial aspects of Naipaul’s writing, King underlines the ambivalence of the views of this “former colonial who has become a homeless cosmopolitan” (2). Chandra B. Joshi in *V. S. Naipaul: The Voice of Exile* depicts Naipaul’s multiple heritage and his feeling of exile in the universe. In an article “Very Much my Father’s Book: Autobiographical Element in *A House for Mr. Biswas*”, Joshi denotes that the house represents Biswas’ search for freedom from dependence.
Pramod Kumar Singh’s “V. S. Naipaul: A Novelist of Uncommon Talent” is an attempt to examine Naipaul’s heritage, in which he remarks that Naipaul’s writings have earned “immense reputation for Indian Writing in English” (146). He also compares the novel, *A Bend in the River*, with Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* where he says, “*A Bend in the River* is a better political novel about India than Rusdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, as its brilliant exposition of Indians is not based on the colour of skin but at the level of different orders of culture” (146). Like *Midnight’s Children*, *A Bend in the River* speaks out on the symbiotic relation in ‘totalitarianism’ between disrespect for the reality and violations of law and rights.

Manjit Inder Singh in *Writers of the Indian Diaspora: V. S. Naipaul Nobel Prize Winner* enumerates on the cultural and literal identity, colonial mimicry and diasporic identification in Naipaul’s works. He also remarks that Naipaul’s novels are his “psychological exploration about his personal, familial and literary burdens” (69). Mohit K. Ray’s edited collection of essays entitled *V. S. Naipaul: Critical Essays Volume I, II and III* give a comprehensive picture of Naipaul and his works.

Shashi Nath Panday in “The Nature of V. S. Naipaul’s Patria” observes how Naipaul explores the various aspects of cross-cultural sensibility in his works. Sharada Iyer in *Musings on Indian Writing in English Fiction* depicts Naipaul’s view on India, his ancestral land and the cultural confusion and rootlessness. She also states that, “It was his non-fiction that brought Naipaul to public attention in the West particularly, his two books on India – *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*” (111). Amarnath Prasad in “Critical Response to Naipaul and Mulk Raj Anand” compares Naipaul and Mulk Raj Anand and discusses the theme of crisis.
Kavita Nandan’s “Exile in The Mimic Men” and Rama Devi’s “Naipaul’s The Mimic Men: Order and Form through Art” are some notable critical analyses of Naipaul’s The Mimic Men. In her article, “Satire and Structure in Naipaul and Narayan”, Rama Devi makes a comparative study of the satire and structure in V. S. Naipaul and R. K. Narayan, where she places Naipaul in the tradition of Indian literature by virtue of Indian names, customs and cultural ideas that proliferate in his works.

Harithar Rath and Karthik Chandra Mishra in “The Mystic Masseur: A Study in Third-World Politics” views this contemporary Trinidad politician and his struggle in an alien society. Pascal P. Buma in “Young Monkey, New Tricks: Foreman’s Apprenticeship in V. S. Naipaul’s The Suffrage of Elvira” closely observes the cultural, racial, social and political variables in the novel. Rama Kundu in his “Naipaul: An Indian Who is not an Indian” brings out, “The complexity and diversity of the problem of literary exiles” (120).

Amod Kumar Rai in his “V. S. Naipaul: A Study of his Nonfictions” talks about resemblances and differences of Naipaul’s nonfiction in the mid twentieth century. He also observes Naipaul’s concept of history and civilisation, colonial heritage and its effects, and Islamic and the West Indian world. Fausto Ciompi in “The Politics of Fluidity in A Bend in the River” reveals, “Individuals struggle on their way to self-realization” (97) in a political context. The vision of life and history provided by the novel A Bend in the River, is one of continuous change and flow.

Naipaul’s famous novel A House for Mr. Biswas has obtained huge reputation among readers and critical examinations. Ramji Lall in “V. S. Naipaul: A House for Mr. Biswas” gives the biographical sketch of Naipaul and a suitable introduction to the novel. Vanda Datta in an article “A House for Mr. Biswas and Half a Life: A Comparative Study” compares the characters and the features of the two novels and calls
Half a Life as “an invention” (97). Pashupati Jha in his article “A House of One’s Own: A Study of V. S. Naipaul’s A House for Mr. Biswas and Toni Morrison’s Beloved” compares the two novels’ characters, their desires and sufferings in domestic life.

Thus, the above furnished reviews of literature exemplify that Naipaul’s works have undergone several interpretations and critical analysis, however, his central point appears to be the experience of his psychological crisis accommodated in his works. Despite contradictory and often negative reactions by critics to Naipaul’s writing, he has definitely developed a distinct authorial voice of his own. Naipaul’s ascendancy in different intellectual circles has been linked with his harsh critical views on the mimicking, destitute and disordered Third World societies which are unable to manage the contradictions of race, religion and politics within their postcolonial histories of a few decades. For this reason, Naipaul still occupies an important position along with other writers of the Third World in the curriculum of most departments of English in the Universities.

Taking into consideration all these observations, analyses and critical interpretations of Naipaul’s writings and with the relevant resources, the researcher proposes to make a close reading of the select works to explore the issues dealt in his works. The proposed research will concentrate on the struggle of East Indians and the way in which the writer champions the social, political and psychological issues of these people through his writings. Disorder and decay should be studied in multidimensional perspective. For that social, political and psychological aspects are to be explored to give a holistic perspective of the culture and society.

**Hypothesis:**

The hypothesis of the research is that the predicament and dilemma of the immigrants in a multicultural society is the main theme of Naipaul’s discourse which
specifically addresses disorder and decay in the Third World society. Consequently, this study embarks on reading Naipaul’s themes and perspectives which would bring out the kaleidoscopic view of the postcolonial society and an insight into the cultural and personal conflicts of the present and the future, where Naipaul probes into the challenges and impediments that these erstwhile colonial societies encounter in the postcolonial world. He also brings to focus the individual, social and cultural fragmentation of the self and the society. The methodology advocated by *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Seventh Edition has been followed closely for the purpose of documentation and citation.

**Objective of the Study:**

The objectives of this study are: (1) to explore colonial and postcolonial Third World societies in the selected novels of Naipaul; (2) to analyse the racial and cultural conflicts in the postcolonial society and its impact on the individual in the selected novels of Naipaul; (3) to interpret the concept of multiculturalism and assimilation; (4) to closely scrutinise and critically analyse the political upheavals in the Third World countries and (5) to draw out the psychological crisis of an individual in a multicultural society ripe with social tensions and political upheavals.

Within the limited canvas available for expounding the thesis, this thematic study confines itself to five of Naipaul’s major novels – *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958), *The Mimic Men* (1967), *A Bend in the River* (1979) and *Half a Life* (2001). These novels deal with the colonial and postcolonial society and they are preoccupied with the themes of mimicry, politics, dispossession, exile, alienation, homelessness and psychological, social and cultural conflicts. These texts symbolise foibles of the society for each decade and give a critical insight into the society which fits the framework of this study. From the abundant Naipaul’s oeuvre, the researcher has
chosen these novels to represent each decade from 1950s to 2001 since the core of these novels discusses the flux and the pull of the postcolonial society effectively. Further, these select novels aptly give way for better understanding of the research objectives.

**Organization of the Work:**

The chapters in this study are structured so as to visualise the different issues in Naipaul’s novels. The introductory chapter presents a brief survey of postcolonial writing with particular focus on few postcolonial writers. It locates Naipaul incisively among these writers and presents an in-depth account of his literary distinctions. It gives a brief account of the author’s life and works. It supplies a review of literature followed by objectives, proposed theoretical framework, hypothesis and research methodology. It also explains the various implications of the novelist’s concern and places him in the context of his contemporary writers and discusses his own views regarding life and his artistic credo.

The second chapter titled “Social Issues: Fragmentation and Disintegration” traces the social issues of the Third World countries which are ever evolving and are in constant flux. Naipaul investigates the social mechanism between the colonised societies and the former colonisers which affect the people decades after the official end of superiority of the colonisers. The colonial experience has caused the colonised to perceive themselves as inferior to the coloniser. They suffer from dislocation, fragmentation, placelessness and loss of identity. As a result, they become mimic men who imitate and reflect the coloniser’s life style. Without the coloniser, the colonised are lost in their postcolonial society. Even though they have won their independence, the postcolonial society fails to offer a sense of national unity and identity.

The social identity of people is rooted in their culture, while at the individual level it is determined by personal achievements. In order to experience a ‘wholeness’, it
is necessary to fuse the individual with social consciousness. However, the paradox of modern predicament lies in the fact that owing to the fragmentation of societies, the affinity that was once felt between the two has now been broken. In the case of artificially created colonial societies like Trinidad, this split becomes even more pronounced.

The postcolonial societies are merely ‘half-made’ societies, full of mimic men who pretend to be the people from metropolises. Naipaul investigates the social mechanism between the colonised societies and the former colonisers which affect people decades after the official end of colonial reign. He has applied it vehemently to expose the evils of the society in a wider spectrum of human experience. Naipaul has the habit of criticising things through social comedy. He condemns the social systems both political and private, which deny individual freedom and contribute to psychological fragmentation, alienation and rootlessness. Thus, in his works Naipaul bitterly satirises the disorder and decay in the contemporary Third World societies and the chaotic life of rootless people in these societies.

The third chapter titled “Political Issues: Disorder and Chaos” delineates how in his novels Naipaul visualises political upheavals of the postcolonial Third World countries just before and after their independence. Naipaul’s views are all about the global political situation, especially the clash between belief and disbelief in postcolonial societies. His approach to the political set up in the post-independence phase in the Caribbean is pessimistic, where he finds little hope in the Caribbean transition from slavery to independence. He is consistently hostile toward “mobilization for political change, believed by the evidence in various political movements, observation of competition, brutality and tribal hostilities” (Bala 25). The failure of the politicians and the chaos and disorder of their ruling countries are vividly visualised by Naipaul through irony and satire.
The fourth chapter titled “Psychological Issues: Of Homelessness and Rootlessness” focuses on Naipaul’s protagonists’ psychological desire to attain an authentic selfhood and identity in an alien world. Some characteristic traits such as frustration, meaninglessness, the sense of the void due to physical and sexual encounter with women of different nations make his protagonists look as antagonists. In presenting his characters as individuals, he acts as a sensitive ironist who distinguishes reality from facts and character from action. Almost all the characters in his novels struggle for existence and fail to find protection or completeness.

Naipaul arouses sympathy by projecting in the reader’s mind the dilemma of his protagonists who, in search of dignity, succeed only in realising themselves as victims of their situation. They not only look for their identity but also search for new values and meanings in the world. They are often torn between the double consciousness of their colonial past and postcolonial present. They neither completely identify with the colonial world nor could they relate themselves with their own native land. They are nomadic in nature and always search their home and root in the rootless world.

The final chapter “Summation” culminates the study with the review of the observations, discussions, findings and recommendations. It provides an overview of the major arguments and discussions in the preceding chapters. It brings out the salient features of Naipaul’s novels chosen for study. It suggests how Naipaul’s writings can be read in terms of the problems that the politics, society and the individual encounter in the postcolonial society. It also highlights the findings of the present study and scope for further research.