helplessness. He needs protection from a world that appears threatening and corrupting. Throughout his life he attempts to search for order.

The political organisations prove ineffective and corrupt. The politicians grow wealthy on bribery and fraud. Becoming political leaders, Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur* and Ralph in *The Mimic Men*, cannot control the riots and unable to help the people who are affected by the riots. They feel they are failed politicians. The result of riot is disorder and chaos.

Colonialism or imperialism therefore, has had an adverse affect on the colonised people. Both imperialism and colonialism have brought complete disorder and disintegration to the colonised, by disconnecting them from their histories, landscapes, languages, customs and beliefs. Rightly so, Fanon states that, “The colonized, underdeveloped man is a political creature in the most global sense of the term” (*The Wretched of the Earth* 3). He also states that, “The function of racism is to convince the coloniser and the colonised, more the latter than the former, that colonial domination, oppressive though it may seem, is necessary. The implication was that the natives were, by their very nature, decadent and incapable of living a normal life” (169).

Thus, the transfer of political power from the hands of the imperial rulers to the natives of these countries has resulted in decadence. The politicians just do what the colonisers have done to them; in the process they themselves become like the colonisers. Total fragmentation of political system has resulted in chaos. Naipaul clearly asserts that ‘things fall apart’ and the political stability, peace and wealth are distant dreams for the postcolonial countries.
CHAPTER IV

PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES: OF HOMELESSNESS AND ROOTLESSNESS

Man, “the protagonist of his own drama” (Gilbert 318), is consciously and painfully aware of his own existence and non-existence in the world. Man feels a stranger in the universe when he is deprived of illusion and of light. He is suffocated by the intellectual scenario of the past and therefore, he is unable to see the present clearly or step towards the future. Cut off from sources of vitality, he leads “a rootless and disintegrated life: his existence is nightmarish” (Chander 107).

The vulgarity, brutality, sordidness and irrationality of the modern world create a stereo-typed individual where everyone is longing for their success and recognition. The most difficult problem that the individual faces today is existentialism. This pervasive existential problem has been treated in American, European, Indian and West Indian literatures. In spite of the fact that many writers have touched upon this aspect in their respective works, the crisis of the West Indian immigrant has been treated by George Lamming, Mill Moltzer, Wilson Harris, Shiva Naipaul, Derek Walcott, Hendric and Melvyn Morries to name a few. These writers write out of sensibility, which is similar to Naipaul’s approach.
Today’s literary society visualises Naipaul’s literary heritage which responds to the quest for cultural identity and the people who are culturally or ethnically circumscribed and who dwell within a colonially assimilated world. As a colonial man, Naipaul has been able to capture the mass migration of the mid 19th century and the experience of the colonised in all its psychological depth. After their settlement in the colonised land, they have been successful in the transportation of the colonial people to other parts of the world, mostly as slaves and indentured labourers. However, after decolonisation, the colonial people voluntarily migrated to various parts of the world. Homi K. Bhabha describes the condition of migrancy as a state of “indeterminacy” or “in-betweenness” in which the migrant is defined by a “separation from origins and essences”, a sense of “un-homeliness”, occupying an indeterminate zone or “Place of Hybridity”, leading to necessary “creolisation” of identity (The Location of Culture 120).

Further, writing about postcolonial migration and its ambivalence, Bhabha views the migrant experience as, “The space of the translation of cultural difference at the interstices is infused with . . . that temporality of the present which makes graphical moment of transition, not merely the continuum of history . . . The migrant culture of the in-between, the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture’s untranslatability . . .” (The Location of Culture 244). The migrant is seen as “the critical participant-observer into his/her own condition, enabling powerful insights to be made into the insider-outsider dichotomy and the real lived experiences of migration” (qtd. in Leela 35). Thus, once dislocated from the country or place of their origin, the migrants or displaced people undergo traumatic experiences of non-belongingness and alienation in the new places where they struggle to relocate and feel at home. They become hybrid individuals; their identity is challenged by the ambivalent nature of their existence that they start wandering
with the questions such as “Who am I? Where do I belong?” These are the vital questions that need to be answered.

In his novels, Naipaul comes to grip with the psychological reality of the association between the colonial West and the colonised Third World. Evoked subjectively with an ample expression of moods, passion, sentiments and emotions, his novels leave a deep impression of the far-reaching and almost lasting damage done to the Third World psyche. The extent of this injury is revealed through the metaphor of distances and journeys. The colonial experience has caused the colonised to identify themselves as inferior to the coloniser. They suffer from dislocation, fragmentation, placelessness and loss of identity which is the “result of oppression” (Angrosino 2). Hence, they become mimic men who imitate and reflect the coloniser’s life style. Frantz Fanon calls them as Black Skin, White Mask. Without the coloniser, the colonised see themselves as 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 crisis of unbelongingness is always a feature which one cannot ignore. This gets reflected in Naipaul’s work which has a strong desire of independence and identity in his writing.

The colonial men, when left in a postcolonial world, where they are supposedly ‘free’ in the so called ‘modern’ world, find themselves even more lost. Being always governed by the colonizers, they are caught unguarded when they leave them. Long years of being dominated by the imperial powers has made themselves to feel ‘worthless’. They feel like unimportant, negligible creatures on the face of the earth. Fanon writes this feeling as:

Affective self-rejection invariably brings the abandonment-neurotic to an extremely painful and obsessive feeling of exclusion, of having no place
anywhere, of being superfluous everywhere in an affective sense. . . . To be ‘The Other’ is to feel that one is always in a shaky position, to be always on guard, ready to be rejected and . . . unconsciously doing everything needed to bring about exactly this catastrophe. (*Black Skin, White Masks* 76)

Naipaul’s major interest in his novels is the psychological effects of colonialism on the modern man. The alienation of vision and the crisis of this displacement are frequently found in the accounts of Canadian free settlers, Australian convicts, West Indian indentured labourers, West Indian slaves and forcibly colonised Nigerians. Although this is pragmatically demonstrable from a wide range of texts, it is difficult to account by postcolonial theories that see this social and linguistic alienation as resulting only from overly oppressive forms of colonisation such as slavery or conquest. An adequate account of this practice must go beyond the usual categories of social alienation such as master or slave; free or bonded; ruler or ruled, however important and these may be widespread in postcolonial cultures.

Colonisation has uprooted people from their own roots in such a way that these people failed to relate themselves to anything afterwards, even after the colonisers left. Therefore, colonial destruction has affected not only the political, economic or social conditions but also the minds of the colonised people. The ‘modern’ world has never been modern to them; modernity is just a matter of words. Moreover, their economic exploitation and cultural disorientation has inflicted lacerating wounds in their psyche, rendering them orphan and destitute, therefore, they remain strangers in their own land.

Twentieth century has produced more refugees, displaced persons and exiles than ever before in history. The creation of new states and new circumstances has produced more wanderers and nomads. Due to their frustration between the old empire and the new
state, their condition characterises the tensions and contradictions in the cross-cultural and overlapping territories in the post-imperial scene. Edward Said views that, “this kind of dispersal and movement of people complicates the process of identity construction. The idea of an authentic identity is intimately tied up with the possibility of achieving one’s full potential in the landscapes hymned by one’s ancestors” (Reflections on Exile 7). Therefore, the history of colonisation has undermined the dream of wholeness, leaving behind a deep disorder. This leads to a deep-rooted concern on the issues of mimicry, authenticity and assimilation.

The migrants belong to nowhere; therefore, they are unaccommodated outsiders everywhere. Yet, the migrants or the exiles can never resist the pull of home. They are constantly haunted by the thought of home which disturbs and disintegrates their mind. Stuart Hall’s observation seems to be justified in this case when he says, “Migration is a one way trip. There is no ‘home’ to go back to” (Black British Cultural Studies 115). Once they leave their home or homeland, the migrants get transformed or translated into homeless persons who can hardly dream of a possible return. They live split lives since they are people of “divided loyalties” (BR 173).

Once cut off from their own roots, tradition and culture, it is difficult for the migrants to attach themselves to the place of their origin, which often falls short of their expectations. They are the victims of colonisation. They have been transplanted from one part of the British Empire to another by force. For those who are transplanted as indentured labourers in the plantation colonies, it is a kind of traumatic break from their country of birth, their origin, culture and religion. Indian migrants in the Caribbean are unwilling to return to India due to fear of insecurity and they are afraid of the unknown in India from which they, their parents or grandparents came long ago. For them, India is a
New World that remains in the memory and eventually, it becomes a kind of imaginary land for them. They are unable to locate or identify themselves in the New World which, though ‘real’, remains an alien land for them and hence, they hang in-between the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’. Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homeland* rightly views that, “Exiles or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back . . .” (10). Thus, in such a situation, the question of identity and belongingness for the extended generations of indentured migrants becomes crucial and problematic. They are neither Indians nor West Indians there is a third possibility of their identity – the unaccommodated and unrepresented “in-between” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 7).

Migration creates desire for home, which in turn produces the rewriting of home. Homesickness or homelessness, the rejection of home or longing for home becomes motivating factors in this rewriting. Home can only have meaning when one experiences a level of displacement from it. By accepting his homelessness and statelessness, Naipaul creates a new identity in exile. He makes a voice not only for himself but also for other marginalised people. Through writing, he translates his “cultural incommensurability” to the world and articulates “the representation of his cultural particularity” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 59).

Naipaul’s long years of stay in India could not bear any fruit. While he longs for home, his home country India has failed to attract him and give shelter. His visits to India, as he himself says, have been an inquiry not only of his ancestral country but also into himself, his roots, his position and identity. He cannot travel only for the ‘sights’, as most other travellers from outside do, but for searching his root and identity. In the process of his search for roots and identity, he realises that India is not his home and cannot be his
home too. Yet, he can neither deny history, nor reject India and be indifferent to it. To this
point Edward Said aptly remarks, “The man who finds homeland is still a tender beginner,
he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong, but he is perfect to whom the
entire world is as a foreign land” (*Reflections on Exile* 7).

The memory of the unpleasant physical experience of India, not only disturbs
Naipaul’s mind, it disintegrates his life too. On his ‘flight’ from India, after his long stay,
Naipaul writes about his Indian trip in *An Area of Darkness* saying, it “was a journey that
ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two” (298). However, as a migrant,
Naipaul’s life has already been broken while he is born in the transplanted British colony
in the New World, where his father has been living a homeless and unsettled life.

Naipaul has been fully conscious of the submissive nature of his island, Trinidad,
which he terms as “second hand” and “barbarous” (*The Middle Passage* 157) and
incapable of any creativity. In this regard, he is unlike other postcolonial migrant writers
such as Derek Walcott, Chinua Achebe, Edward Braithwaite, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and
many others, who continue to maintain their native Caribbean or African identity. For
Naipaul, “the Caribbean continues to be a place that denies him a sense of identity” (King
204). It is obvious that the Indian migrants never felt at home due to their sense of
alienation arising out of deprivation, lack of opportunities, colonial mimicry and fierce
racial prejudices. Hence, at an early age, Naipaul realises this lacking in colonial Trinidad
and decides to escape to the metropolitan centre of the world. Yet, the West Indian Creole
society is unable to provide him any shelter, belongingness and identity.

Identity is, particularly that of people scattered throughout the world away from
their homeland, they are “closely linked to place, to key places and often to the place that
we call home” (Woodward 65). The problem of identity is one of the burning issues today. It becomes “an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (Mercer 43). It is related more to placelessness than to rootlessness. In the fragmented and chaotic postcolonial world, the individual faces an identity crisis which can be successfully resolved by assimilation, irrespective of the society. The search for identity is a quest that has social and psychological connotations. According to Stuart Hall, search for identity is indeed a profound “cultural discovery” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 241).

A displaced person is an individual who for some reason lives in a country or society other than his own. Hence, identity is constructed on an individual basis, but within a given social structure, the alienation of which could lead to a corresponding alienation of identity. In Nation and Narration, Bhabha strongly argues against the tendency to essentialise Third World countries into a homogenous identity, where he identifies the relationship of antagonism and ambivalence, and of colonisers and the colonised.

Identity is asserted in not only individual, community, social, national and racial terms but as something to be recreated to overcome the sense of loss and fragmentation. Naipaul’s own identity fluctuates between his Indian Hindu Brahmin ancestry with a disgrace of indentured labour and his own homeless, hybridised and uncertain position in the world. Yet, his upper-caste Hindu sensibility rescues him during his early barren days in England. His search for roots takes him back after a gap of eleven years to Trinidad and then to India.

The central focus of Naipaul is in his presentation of society as too far from the individual’s sense of belonging. It is a situation where the individual is seen engaged in the
questions of social and cultural identity. Cultural identities, especially in the Caribbean, are defined by heterogeneity of features, racial, cultural and experiential:

The diaspora experience . . . is defined, not by essence and purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference . . .” (Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 402).

The emergence of displaced individuals, uprooted and without a distinct place is apparent in Naipaul’s fiction. Akhtar Jamal Khan in V. S. Naipaul: A Critical Study rightly observes the transfer of the uprooted people in the Caribbean islands:

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

The state of one’s feeling of having been displaced is called ‘un-homeliness’, a term coined by Homi Bhabha and other theorists of postcolonialism. It is the sense of being in-between two or more cultures. The ‘un-homeliness’ is “the condition of extraterritorial and cross cultural initiations” and the un-homely moment relates, “The traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (Bhabha, The Location of Culture 9-10). An un-homed person does not have the feeling of belonging since he is in a psychological limbo which generally ends in a
psychological disorder and cultural displacement. Here, being ‘un-homed’ does not mean being homeless. To be un-homed, as Lois Tyson states in *Critical Theory Today*, “is to feel not at home even in one’s own home because you are not at home in yourself; that is, your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee” (421). In this regard, anyone who scrutinises Naipaul’s works can realise that Naipaul has a strong feeling of un-homeliness, although he has a home in Wiltshire, England. The emotional aridity of his fiction reflects the actuality of the lives of his homeless, lost and lonely individuals where he has explored with great sensitivity the predicament of the exile – the pain of homelessness and loss of roots. Therefore, “Home is not simply where one lives. It is one’s identity – national, cultural [and] spiritual. Home is where one belongs – it is the soil that has nurtured one’s body and spirit. Home is security, Exile, the loss of home. Home is the place with which we remain intimate even in moments of intense alienation from it” (Chaturvedi 1).

Exile has been defined variously by Diasporic writers from A. K. Ramanujan to Meena Alexander, Salman Rushdie to Bharati Mukherjee and Gayatri Spivak to Homi Bhabha. These writers have to face the dominant feeling of ‘otherness’ and ‘outsider’ in a state of being fully adjusted. Similarly, Edward Said’s paradox of identity is indicative of the complex identities of Diasporic and postcolonial people throughout the world today. For Said, exile is “one of the saddest fates” (Said, *Reflections on Exile* 47), it is a mental condition – a sense of security and anxiety for living half a life and a terrible experience. It is “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home [and] a condition of terminal loss” (Said, *Reflections on Exile* 138). It is literally “an uprooting and often as withering in its effect on the mind and spirit which is deprived of the sustenance it has drawn from native soil” (Shukla and Chaturvedi 43).
Therefore, exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates who are dispossessed and expatriated:

... becomes something closer to a norm, an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classic canonical enclosures... Newly changed models and types jostle against older ones. The reader and writer of literature—which itself loses its perdurable forms and accepts the testimonials, revisions, notations of post-colonial experience, ... no longer need be tied to an image of the poet or scholar in isolation, secure, stable, national in identity, class, gender or profession. (Said, *Reflections on Exile* 384)

Naipaul records the course of his self-discovery to the full dissolution of a realisation of permanent exile. He considers himself as “a man without a country” (Iyer 110), because his plight is that of “an irremediable exile” (qtd. in Shukla and Chaturvedi 42). As a homeless man, he feels utterly rootless and as an absolute exile. Hence, his life in exile has become a hallmark of his literary career. Rob Nixon and Nayantara Sahgal interpret Naipaul’s exilic condition far too literally. To them, Naipaul’s exile is prevalent on all levels: “literal, existential and transcendental” (Nixon, “London Calling: V. S. Naipaul and the License of Exile” 3). Nixon takes issue with the rhetorical way Naipaul uses his marginalised position, claiming that the notion of “writer in exile” or Naipaul’s “willed homelessness” is one that is used with poetic license where “Naipaul can trumpet his alienation while implicitly drawing on a secure, reputable tradition of extratraditionalism” (Nixon, “London Calling: V. S. Naipaul and the License of Exile” 11).

Sahgal’s central concern is that Naipaul’s exile is located in the former imperial center. Her self-defined position of a nationalist Indian identity and heralding a position of rootedness, belonging and national culture reflects her own unease and difficulties in a
world subject to indeterminacy. Hence, the idea of home is associated with family, moral and traditional values:

Home is not simply where one lives. It is one’s identity – national, cultural, spiritual. Home is where one belongs to – it is the soil that has nurtured one’s body and spirit. It is the language one speaks and the food one eats; it is the trees and the flowers and the animals and insects and the rivers and the mountains that have also been there; it is the rituals and the do’s and don’ts, the joys and the sorrows and all the sights, smells and sounds that lap one’s childhood and from part of one’s growing consciousness. (Shukla and Chaturvedi 43)

Homelessness is seen as a universal condition in the modern world, threatening all races, even the former colonial rulers. Homelessness is an eminent feature that emerges as a result of colonisation. Roshan Cader in *V. S. Naipaul: Homelessness and Exiled Identity* aptly remarks that, “The historical trauma marked by the events of World War II, the flight, fight and terror it produced, and the influx of colonial migrants to the imperial centre following the end of World War II, continues to have ramifications on present-day society in the image of homelessness” (97). In today’s rapidly changing world the yearning for permanence can never be more than the unfulfilled ache that everyone is far from home.

It is to this world-wide crisis of homelessness that Naipaul’s work is a sensitive response which is taking into its sweep both the causes and consequences of the situation. One can find the agony of an exile and the pangs of a man in search of meaning and identity in his works. His writings are a process of self discovery. It is through his writings he arrives at a vision of modern homelessness as a product of historical forces, to an
acceptance of his own homelessness as final, and to a perception that his own plight is not singular but typical of postcolonial world. Paul Theroux in *V. S. Naipaul: An Introduction to his Work* provides an insightful analysis of Naipaul’s place and position in his early criticism: “His [Naipaul’s] is a condition of homelessness . . . For the rootless person, every country is a possible temporary home; but for Naipaul, there is no return, either to a past or a place . . . Naipaul is the first of his line, without a tradition or a home” (78). Homelessness is evident in Naipaul’s novels through the characters of Ganesh, Ralph, Salim and Willie. All of them suffer from lack of history. Throughout their life, they move to and fro from their Island to London, never being able to settle anywhere. They have no knowledge of their own histories or their ancestors because their histories were erased by the colonisers. Whatever imaginary ideas they have about their homeland are by reading books, those even written by the colonisers.

Alienation, the outcome of exile and homelessness, is usually defined as a feeling of separation or isolation, associated with minorities, the poor and other groups in the periphery who have limited power to bring about changes in society. Alienation is regarded as a reaction against a particular social or political set up which often leads to a stronger attachment to the unfulfilled ideal, usually finding an outlet in expression of love for the land and the language. For Fanon, the colonised’s alienation is a state of self-hatred created by the history and culture of European empire and it can only be overcome through the historical and political process of decolonisation. This process of radical, historical and societal change may only be catalysed through the antithesis of the colonial inferiority complex.

The strength of Naipaul’s vision lies in the individual’s predicament in terms of alienation, exile and quest for identity. His “fiction is designed to convey to the readers the
experiences of a particular situation in which alienation and absurdity occur in contemporary life” (Kamra 39). His novels reflect a deep understanding of his alienation from the three countries – India, British and Caribbean. In countries like India, Africa and Caribbean, colonial education alienate men from their own culture and traditions and make them exiles in their own lands, in which industrialisation and urbanisation make the people move towards city in search of jobs and property. But, they feel as an outsider and fail to take up life and become a citizen of just anywhere and make their own “cultures and ethnic identities” (Said, Reflections on Exile 12).

In the Caribbean island of Trinidad, Naipaul has always felt like an outsider. This feeling of an ‘outsider’ enhances when he goes to live in England for his education. It is clear from his biography that Naipaul has always felt the necessity of a ‘home’ in order to feel himself to belong somewhere. He wants a materialistic security to relate himself to his surroundings and to feel in place. During his stay in London, Naipaul is denounced as unworthy and unfit to get a ‘proper’ job and when he does, it is a “job as a radio presenter on the BBC’s Caribbean Voices” (qtd. in Noor 9).

Naipaul has created a number of “incomparable” (Theroux 16) characters – Ganesh, Harbans, Mr. Baksh, Mr. Biswas, Mr. Stone, Ralph Singh, Jimmy Ahmed, Salim and Willie Chandran. His characters are mostly rural and poor, who undergo a lot of “trials and tribulations” (Ray, V. S. Naipaul: An Introduction 12) in their life. The common factors of his heroes are exile, alienation, homelessness and rootlessness. Even though they emerge from different social classes, they are linked to each other and to their ancestors by an impulse to keep up with the reality about themselves and their world. They discover the meaning and value of life probing through the dark mossy labyrinths of the soul. His characters are mainly outsiders or alienated persons who suddenly become aware of their
morality, powerlessness, intrinsic isolation and the meaninglessness of existence in a normless world. They are alienated in one way or other from their family or society or from their own self. His protagonists are disappointed with their unproductive and unbearable past of slavery, dependency and inferiority. Therefore, they suffer from extreme alienation and engage themselves in one way or other to escape from their sordid realities and are always in search of a more dignified life. They are self-centered persons, caught in a complex and paradoxical situation from which they try to escape. They belong to Indian heritage, but are raised in the British Caribbean islands, where they are seen struggling against the agony of cultural displacement and identity crisis.

Naipaul reveals his characters’ psychological crisis which permeates their inner and outer reality. Swept along by the eternal fluctuation of life, they are buffeted by the exigencies of this crisis and desperately seek for ways and means to comprehend the disillusioned and frustrated aspects of life. They associate self-fulfilment not with material desires, but with achievement of emotional and intellectual desires. Their quest for identity seems to be a precarious desire between the unpredictable contradictions and progressions of life, yet, their quest for identity reflects a universal human aspiration.

In *The Mystic Masseur*, writing shapes Ganesh’s personality and gives him a significant identity which paves the way for political ascendency. His books *What God Told Me* and *Profitable Evacuation* enhance his popularity throughout Trinidad. Moreover, the year Nineteen forty-six is a turning point in his career, as he publishes his autobiography, *The Years of Guilt* through Ganesh Publishing Co. Ltd, Port of Spain at $2.40 for each copy. Considered as a spiritual thriller, he heightens his esteem in Central America and the Caribbean. Firmly, he believes that he has been born to do something great and that will make his future a grand one. “Like Huck Finn, he invents and re-invents
himself again and again, only realizing he cannot find a secure permanent identity in any of the inventions” (Kundu 144).

Before launching on a writing career Ganesh says, “A man may turn over half a library to make one book” (TMM 73). The act of reading opens up a new world of thought for Ganesh and also increases his understanding of his own world. Through his writings, he is pleased to establish himself as the most learned man in Trinidad, but he is a tough survivor against the odds in his life and he lives up to the image of the East Indians in Trinidad. This is true with Naipaul whose writing constructs his identity. Therefore, ‘writing’ is a mode of representation that emerges from “mimesis and mimicry” (Bhabha, The Location of Culture 23).

Selwyn Cudjoe writes, “The Mystic Masseur is not in keeping with the tradition of ‘Hindu mystical classics’ because it is couched as an autobiographical statement and records the activities of Ganesh. The author, however, is forced to use this autobiographical style precisely because he is in the wilderness. ‘The mystic’ in a new land is forced to compromise” (44). Naipaul resents the East Indian mystical experiences in the West through Ganesh in an autobiographical mode, exposing facts of the real historical condition in East Indies; he “found himself a mystic when Trinidad was crying out for one” (TMM 193). Ganesh’s autobiography plays a big role in his success:

The autobiography shows that he believed strongly in predestination; and the circumstances which conspired to elevate him seem indeed to be providential. If he had been born ten years earlier it is unlikely, if you take into account the Trinidad Indian’s attitude to education at that time, that his father would have sent him to the Queen’s Royal College. He might have become a pundit, and a mediocre pundit. If he had been born ten years later
his father would have sent him to America or Canada or England to get a profession – the Indian attitude to education had changed so completely – and Ganesh might have become an unsuccessful lawyer or a dangerous doctor. \(TMM\ 193\)

Fortunately, Ganesh’s career succeeds as a masseur and he becomes very famous on the island. He gains a lot of money and he becomes a man of name and fame. This helps him to be a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) and later a Member of the British Empire (MBE). The course of his transformation from ‘masseur’ to ‘mystic’ reveals his acquisition of knowledge he got from the books. He impresses the people and earns their admiration like the school master in Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Village Schoolmaster”. As a result, old people call him as “Walking Dictionary” \(TMM\ 189\). Even in the beginning, the narrator states with awe, “I often thought with a good deal of puzzled interest about the little man locked away with all those fifteen hundred books in the hot and dull village of Fuente Grove” \(TMM\ 7\).

The novel also shows Ganesh’s efforts to develop the Hindu Indian community in Trinidad, in which he plays a major social and cultural role for Hinduism, “not as a system of belief, but as the resident Hindu institution” \(\text{Mustafa 45}\). Ganesh turns into a successful mystic by combining Indian mysticism with Western psychoanalysis. Chandra B. Joshi in \textit{V. S. Naipaul: The Voice of Exile} rightly views that, Ganesh’s rise from “masseur to mystic, mystic to MLC may have elements of the farce about it. But the episode which launches Ganesh as mystic has nothing farcial about it” \(117\).

In Ganesh’s point of view, however, circumstances were on his side in shaping his career, “He was served even by his enemies. Without Narayan’s attacks Ganesh would never have taken up politics and he might have remained a mystic. With unfortunate
results” (TMM 193). To this point, Sigmund Freud in “Civilization and its Discontent” states that, “It is impossible to escape the impression that people commonly use false standards of measurement . . . that they seek power, success and wealth for themselves and admire them in others, and that they underestimate what is of true value in life” (98).

From the beginning, Ganesh is seen as a man who moves ahead only by rejecting loyalties and responsibilities. He feels free with a new name, new profession, unhampered by his wife, friends and the world before him. The clash between his ideal and actual self provides interesting occasion for exploring the conflicting pulls of reality and fantasy. The narrator’s ironic approach succeeds in highlighting Ganesh’s pathetic failures as well as his potential in accepting his new awareness of the world. Dramatising the mutual involvement of Ganesh and the narrator, Naipaul enables the reader to realise the existential experience of each as differing because of the different sense of time and place. Thus, The Mystic Masseur is a very exact expression of Naipaul’s views on the contemporary Trinidadian and shows the transformation of a religious impostor into a fake revolutionary, yet he succeeds in his role.

The Suffrage of Elvira is a novel in which Naipaul introduces a range of characters who live in inconvenient conditions and whose lives are scattered, without any destination, it is “a superbly humorous blow-up of human flaws and fetishes” (Ramajeyalaksmi 602). It presents the chaos of the present to suggest a very disordered past. It gives the account of the individuals, who actually in their real life, live for personal gain and corruption. It also observes the contemptuousness, duplicity and pessimism present in the individuals. Although the novel’s central theme is politics and electioneering, Naipaul’s sole concern is to present scenes dealing with family misunderstandings, neighbourly quarrels, lovers’ meetings and other incidents in which he sheds significant light on the ways and manners
of the people. Through Ramlogan, Chittaranjan and Mr. Baksh, Naipaul exhibits the
neighbourly quarrel and the greedy nature of the people in Elvira, like the people in the
contemporary world.

Most pervasive in this novel is the realities of the world, which is conveyed
through witty sketches. There is no particular narrator distancing the characters and
shaping the reader’s critical response, “The characters themselves are given vitality,
inventiveness, and a resilience, that make their world seem much more palpable to the
reader” (L. White 87). All the characters in the novel are the product of contemptuousness
where no one receives any sympathy. Even the characterisation of Harbans is superficial
and he never becomes a real person in our imagination.

Therefore, the novel *The Suffrage of Elvira*, records Naipaul’s creative encounter
with his time and place in the life he knew best. Naipaul once remarked in an interview
with David Bates: “I would like to be frivolous again. I would love to write another
*Suffrage of Elvira*” (13). Personal favours are claimed as a matter of right even if that
meant violation of certain crucial democratic principles. On the whole, the novel portrays
“the farcically grotesque, barren, [and] an absurd element of life in Elvira” (Derrick 199)
which also shows the worst and evil side of human behaviour in the West Indian society.

*The Mimic Men* clearly marks “the end of . . . an absorption with his [Naipaul’s]
personal homelessness” (L. White 10). Ralph the protagonist, suffers from the feeling of
being homeless which gives rise to his identity crisis. Born in the Island of Isabella among
people of mixed ethnicities he had always been detached from his original homeland India.
He suffers from ‘genetic’ dislocation which, according to Rob Nixon, “refers to the
condition of the East Indians in the Caribbean. They crossed the *kala pani*, black water,
and thus, they lost their Indianness” (“London Calling: V. S. Naipaul and the License of
Moreover, Ralph as a member of an ethnic minority on the island also experiences “ethnic displacement” which refers to his status as “an Indian in Isabella” (Nixon, “London Calling: V. S. Naipaul and the License of Exile” 6).

Naipaul has presented Ralph as a conscious man who is more evolved than that of Ganesh or Harbans. Ralph represents the directionless and aimless modern man who goes on doing things without any motive behind it. The incapacity of the characters to find a home, despite the numerous efforts, is touching and pitiable. Home, for them is not a quest for identity but a search for roots.

Through Ralph, Naipaul depicts the psychological crisis of a man who is living in constant fear of change, being insignificant and alienated. As a victim of the colonial education system, Ralph has always been encouraged to imitate the empire and to become a ‘mimic man’. His colonial education has taught him that England is the symbol of order. When he studies English culture and history he feels that his own culture is inferior to that of the coloniser. Hence, his education has caused him to become a homeless man with no self-image. As a result, he is alienated both from the metropolitan London and from the colonial West Indian societies. He soon realises that escape becomes a way of life and displacement a permanent condition. Chandra B. Joshi in *V. S. Naipaul: The Voice of the Exile* rightly states:

> Love of home and the anguish of exile have been among the basic human emotions in civilized societies. The ethos of the Western world has been dominated by the Biblical myth of the banishment of Adam and Eve from their first abode of bliss. It is a powerful symbol of the feeling of exclusion, of exile, from some perfect home that seems to be deeply embedded in the
human psyche and finds expression in the literature and mythology of many societies. (3)

Ralph does not feel at home anywhere and moves from place to place, assumes many roles but his inner struggle remains the same: “From room to room I moved, from district to district, going ever farther out of the heart of the city. . . . My world was being corrupted! . . . I abolished all landscapes to which I could not attach myself and longed only for those I had known” (MM 30). Homelessness is conveyed through a series of impermanent houses that Ralph occupies: Mr. Shylock’s boarding house in Kennington, the Roman house, the Beach house, the Scandinavian house and the hotel room in London. Ralph’s father overcomes this feeling of homelessness by escaping into mysticism and in the life of a hermit. Ralph attempts all possibilities but nowhere does he find his authentic self. As a failed man he feels shipwrecked, which is “a metaphor of homelessness or exile from a true home” (Nandan 140). To eschew his shipwreck on the island, Ralph decides to abandon Isabella. When he goes to London as a delegate to the conference on nationalisation, the image of the shipwrecked person comes to him again and again and he plans to find a way to come out of that chaos.

Ralph is the mimic man who is much conscious of his mimicry and its negative consequences. He recognises and criticises 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). He is like Salim in A Bend in the River and Willie Chandran in Half a Life moving from one place to another in search of meaning.

Throughout the novel Ralph travels in search of being a true mimic man but at the end he travels in search of a true free man. He embraces the footsteps of the colonisers and becomes a mimic man in the process. In the end he realises that imitating the English men
will make him a good mimic man but not an original white person because “mimicry repeats rather than represents” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 125). Thus, mimicry leads Ralph ultimately nowhere and takes away his own native identity. It does not help him in becoming the ‘white’ man.

Unlike his friends, Ralph cannot share any pleasure from the Island which he thinks to be infertile. His friends “memoirs were individual and romantic, his were historic and sublime” (Cooke 35). Therefore, throughout the novel, Ralph spends all his life travelling from places to places to find an order and for a final settlement in his life. He realises that, being the ‘mimic man’ would not help him find his own identity. Rather, by changing his name from Ranjit Kirpalsingh to an English name Ralph Singh, he goes further away from the identity he searches for.

Ralph wants to escape from the disordered life in Isabella and search for order in London. Hence, he leaves on a scholarship to London, thinking it to be the centre of his world where he hopes to find fulfilment, but ironically, he continues to feel like a shipwrecked person in London. Initially, he idealises London as a ‘promised land’ which will provide him with the order, solidity and protection which he so desperately seeks and so vehemently believes that Isabella will not be able to provide. He perceives Isabella to be a third-rate place, and London to be a place of excitement, magic, romance and greater subtleties. He views, “London as a city of purity and perfection, whereas in truth he finds it to be a larger Isabella with its own sort of mimic men, hypocrites and insecure people” and feels “a sense of anonymity and loneliness” (Mukherjee 197).

London does not satisfy Ralph, because there he has not been able to find the ideal culture presented to him through books. Even the sexual promiscuity in which he indulges in order to fight a sense of loss does not give him any permanent gain. This is the common
condition of the colonised man who imitates the coloniser. He confesses this while at
Isabella, the island of his birth, he had been painfully aware of his ambiguous new world
background. When he arrives with hope and promise to London he becomes completely
disappointed, he says, “So quickly had London gone sour on me. The great city, centre of
the world, in which, fleeing disorder, I had hoped to find the beginning of order” (MM 17).
His frustration is revealed through his outbursts in which he regards himself as ‘an
outsider’ and is always oppressed by insecurity and a feeling of waste. Moreover, what
torments him even more is the fear of losing his identity. Veena Singh in Literature and
Ideology: Essay in Interpretation rightly remarks, “He passes through extreme moments of
negation and despair while journeying from one place to another. The scene at the
unknown country station is the climax of his desolation and homelessness. Neither his
physical nor his mental journeys have brought him any real fulfilment” (164).

Ralph’s journey takes him only a few months in London, his fantasy city, to realise
that there is a greater disorder there and a more painful shipwreck of lives. In Mr.
Shylock’s boarding house where he stays, he meets a multitude of lonely immigrants in “a
conglomeration of private cells. In the city as nowhere else we are reminded that we are
individuals, units” (MM 17). The attempt at simplification has resulted only “in this
switching back and forth between one world and another” (MM 167), and the necessity
always “to rise and prepare for another departure” (MM 259). Thus, Ralph never finds the
order in London, rather he finds himself in greater disorder.

By analysing and interpreting his own experiences Ralph hopes to find some order
within the chaos of the present, and the uncertainty of the future in the contemporary
colonial society. Living in disorder, Ralph longs for a sense of control over his life and
therefore, he turns to writing which becomes a “means of releasing” from the “barren
cycle of events” (L. White 180). As Richard Kelly has pointed out, “it is through the expression and presentation of the events that he can reduce the pain of being a displaced colonial man: the act of writing his memoirs provides him the final solution to his sense of dislocation, for through writing he is at last able to take control of the fragments of his past and shape them into a spiritual and psychological autobiography” (90).

Writing allows human being to be more self-aware and self-reflexive of the fact that his subjectivity is constituted through the colonial condition of “splitting” and “dissembling” (Bhabha, Nation and Narration 7). Memory is, therefore, invoked in a big way, since the past is revisited and reconstructed in an attempt to consolidate the present. “It is never a quiet act of introspection or reintrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabha, Nation and Narration 63). His fragmented past and disordered present mirrors “his spirit and confuses his mind” (Cader 80). His transition from innocence to experience and his exploration of his own personal disorder is described in many dimensions. Ralph writes about the period between his preparation for life and his withdrawal from it and mentions it as a “period in parenthesis” (MM 42). The constant shifts from the past to the present and the future may also reflect his internal chaos.

Through his writing, Ralph examines and analyses the colonial and postcolonial periods; historical, cultural and political backgrounds, economic problems and psychological conflicts. Finally, he takes control of his sense of dislocation as he realises that there is no ideal place with which he can identify himself. The constant shifts between the past, the present, and the future may also reflect Ralph’s mental disturbances, as he struggles “like an artist to create something to discover some meaning in the muddled state
of affairs, which his life has been” (Devi, “V. S. Naipaul’s The Mimic Men: Order and Form through Art” 31). He fluctuates between the two lives – the obscurity of Isabella and the sterility of London in which he is unable to surrender himself or to secure a place in London or Isabella. He becomes a doll in the hands of destiny. He is a betrayed, violated and entrapped individual who has no culture and morals of his own. He fails because he tries to find out external solutions for the internal problems. Therefore, his failures at the level of personal life are indicative of a larger national failure.

Ralph’s migration to the metropolis brings about his cultural dislocation. The experience of the exile results in his alienation from the social and cultural environment and the cultural mimetic experience place him in a hybrid space. Bhabha apprehends the consequences of the heterogeneity and hybridity in The Location of Culture: “From such a colonial encounter between the white presence and its black semblance, there emerges the question of the ambivalence of mimicry as a problematic of colonial subjection” (129).

Ralph’s cultural paralysis recalls James Joyce’s portrayal of Stephen Dedalus. The affinities between The Mimic Men and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man as narratives, in which artistic development is premised on disaffection with and alienation from nation and home, show the deep embeddedness of the author in the literary tradition of the metropolitan centre. Ralph’s final detachment is an expression of a “distance from any clear-cut national identity or notion of home” (Nixon, “London Calling: V. S. Naipaul and the License of Exile” 3). His final state is a real “final emptiness” (Morris, Paradoxes of Order: Some Perspectives on the Fiction of V. S. Naipaul 66). Hence, ‘home’ can never ultimately be more than the books he writes or, perhaps more precisely, the action of writing them” (Gottfried 443). By idealising the past, Ralph wants to reconstruct history to establish his identity, however, he realises that such a task is impossible and therefore, he
becomes disillusioned. He echoes and parodies a deserved view of history where he says that “the unnatural bringing together of people who could achieve fulfilment only within the security of their own societies and the landscapes hymned by their ancestors” (MM 32). Thus, “The descriptions of the immigrant’s life in ‘The Mimic Men’ show how disillusioning that life could be” (Simpson 574).

In A House for Mr. Biswas Naipaul observes that social breakdown is entirely a West Indian experience, whereas in The Mimic Men he shows the West Indian experience to be universal. Naipaul is very clear on his point: “I wrote what I saw; what in fact, I see every day and what I know . . .” (Boxill 15). Hence, he presents a coherent view of human predicament in its paradoxes and contradictions.

In postcolonial studies, the relationship between the coloniser and the native is given a great deal of attention. The coloniser is represented as the embodiment of the values of the Empire responsible for the invention of the colony. The native is represented as the physical and psychological manifestation of the scars inflicted on the colony by the Empire. For the most part, these discussions are carried out at the expense of another important participant in the development of the colony: the immigrant communities who either come to the colony of their own decision or they import themselves into the region from another part of the world by the colonial regime are generally overlooked. Yet, they play an important role in shaping the nature and direction of colonial rule and therefore contribute considerably to the evolution of the colonial situation.

These groups of immigrants are best understood collectively as ‘non-native native’ communities. This is because they occupy positions in the relationships established in the colony that both identify and separate them from the colonisers, on the one hand, and the natives on the other. In general, they are positioned between the colonisers and the natives
in the hierarchical relationships of communities, races and classes established by the colonial situation. They are non-natives because they trace their heritage to another part of the world, but they are natives because, like the indigenous groups, they are subjected to the power of the coloniser. Secondly, they are non-natives because they are less threatening to the coloniser than the natives, on the basis of which they enjoy privileges that the coloniser denies the native proper, but they are natives because they are excluded from certain economic and political privileges that are reserved for the coloniser. In response to these forces, they exist as closed societies in the colonies. Apart from their participation in the life of the colony as workers, they are cut off socially, economically and politically from both the colonisers and the natives. Their separation from Arabia, Persia and India has estranged them from their roots, while their foreignness has prevented them from identifying fully with Africa and became ‘non-native natives’. Naipaul explains this condition of ‘non-native natives’ in *A Bend in the River* through Salim:

_AFRICA WAS MY HOME, had been the home of my family for centuries. But we came from the east coast, and that made the difference. The coast was not truly African. It was an Arab-Indian-Persian-Portuguese place, and we who lived there were really people of the Indian Ocean. True Africa was at our back. Many miles of scrub or desert separated us from the up-country people; we looked east to the lands with which we traded – Arabia, India, Persia. These were also the lands of our ancestors. But we could no longer say that we were Arabians or Indians or Persians; when we compared ourselves with these people, we felt like people of Africa. (BR 12)_

The communities which are represented in *A Bend in the River* – the Indian, Persian and Arab are non-native native communities. They are characterised by an
ambiguous and ambivalent relationship with their ancestral origins in India and the Middle
East and their presence in East and Central Africa. They look back to their glorious
contributions to human civilisation with a great deal of nostalgia and pride, but they are
trapped in Africa on the basis of the cultural roots they have sunk on the east coast and the
economic power base they have developed over the years. When they are examined within
the context of the prevailing neocolonial framework, they are viewed as inferior to
Africa’s former colonisers in terms of their racial attributes and their economic power, but
they are considered superior to the indigenous communities in both respects. Furthermore,
they are non-native natives because, due to their numerical inferiority vis-à-vis the local
people, they cannot contribute significantly to the political destiny of the region despite
their economic power. The result is that they exist in the region more or less as enclaves of
Asian and Middle Eastern cultures in an overwhelmingly African cultural context. During
the colonial era, they strove to avoid political confrontation with Africa’s European
colonisers on the one hand, and the local people on the other, concentrating their energies
on the economic and cultural aspects of their lives and for the most part interacting with
indigenous groups only within the context of the workplace. In the course of the transition
from colonial to independence, their social status is disturbed by the departure of the
former colonisers and the increasing political power of the indigenous groups.

Taking into consideration, the novel *A Bend in the River* relies on Homi Bhabha’s
notion of ‘unhomeliness’. It portrays the corruptibility of the human heart and evil rooted
in human nature in modern Africa. Naipaul records his impressions of Africa and its
inhabitants who confront problem of displacement and identity. The very first sentence of
the novel, “THE WORLD IS what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to
become nothing, have no place in it” (*BR* 3) reflects the philosophy of life.
Salim makes the same journey as the slaves had made in reverse: from the east coast to central Africa. His journey towards the heart of the continent is a journey to the heart of Africanness and the essence of slavery. Salim’s family is Muslim, but they are a special group distinct from the Arabs and other Muslims of the coast; in their customs and attitudes they are closer to the Hindus of north-western India, from where they have come originally. For them, life is an eternal present: “We simply lived; we did what was expected of us, what we had seen the previous generation do. We never asked why; we never recorded . . . the past was simply the past” (BR 12) and “We continued to live as we had always done, blindly” (BR 19). This lack of perspective makes them concerned with what is spatially close and what is chronologically immediate. This historical fatalism affects Salim, Mahesh and the denizens bend in the river for they say, “We have no idea where the continent is going. We can only carry on” (BR 158) which express the intention to indefinitely extend the present that Salim and people like him are living. But, Salim has always felt like an ‘outsider’, as if he did not belong anywhere. Hence, he is resentful to everything around him; he admires and at the same time envies the natives and the English people.

The African state becomes a junkyard for different reasons though its inhabitants are also out of sympathy with the land. Though exploited, its wealth, material and manpower, are far from exhausted. It is choked by its own lushness, richness and inability of its people to defend themselves, leave alone meet the challenges of the modern world. In Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays Achebe recalls, “Native people camping in the ruins of civilization . . . Africa has no future” (18-19).

Salim is unable to find a place in the African state to call his own, but he comes to a destroyed town, leaving his family and community behind in the coast in order to make a
fresh start. Naipaul too, leaves his small community of Indians and the island behind in order to make a fresh start like Salim to become something. Naipaul has always longed to escape from the ‘void’ of his island, which is a ‘dot’ on the map of the world. His Western education and sensibility has no doubt made him a distinguished writer and a member of the mainstream metropolitan society, yet, as a migrant, his dilemma, like any other postcolonial migrants, is to locate or place himself in the outside world. From within his pseudo-European world, Salim feels somewhat secure: “Because they could assess themselves, the Europeans were better equipped to cope with changes than we were” (BR 19). He does not find his Europe even in London. The Europe he encounters is by no means the Europe “had defeated the Arabs in Africa and controlled the interior of the continent” (BR 268). It is Europe that still feeds those people in a hundred ways with its language and sends them its increasingly wonderful goods, things which in the bush of Africa, “something shrunken and mean and forbidding” (BR 269).

The new and modern Africa is no home for people like Zabeth and Ferdinand. Ferdinand is symbolic of the new man of Africa, but, his “mixed tribal heritage” (BR 53) alienates him from the indigenous Africans in the town. Therefore he is divided between the two ways of life, he can neither become a part of the new, nor can he return to the old. Like Ferdinand, Salim also remains divided between the town and the domain. Metty, Salim’s servant, part Arab and part African, is also a ‘wanderer’ is displaced at the town in the bend in the river.

Through Indar, Salim begins to construct an idea of home, root and tradition in his consciousness. His aversion to home as a place of roots, historic foundations, traditions and belonging enables Salim’s survival in the world. Salim thinks that he can make his home wherever he wants and whenever he feels like, but it becomes difficult and almost
impossible when things begin to happen in the form of uprisings. His capacity to detach himself from the immediate situation becomes evident when he says, “So from an early age I developed the habit of looking, detaching myself from a familiar scene and trying to consider it as from a distance” (BR 17). This kind of detachment makes him feel an outsider, but he is practical enough to find out the solution for his problem. He never perceives his apartment as home and never takes away the stacks of bad paintings which is left by the previous owner: “He keeps it as he found it, however inconvenient, as a permanent reminder that he has made himself a place in the world and has therefore, as the novel’s first sentence puts it, allowed himself to become nothing” (Gorra 64). Neither the town nor the domain can provide a home for Salim. Oppressed by the barrenness of his life he consoles himself with the thought that he can always move on. He says, “I was homesick, had been homesick for months. But home was hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost” (BR 123-24). In the displacement, “the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting” (Bhabha, The Location of Culture 9).

Salim cannot be like his friend Indar who has learned to survive in the world through the evaporation of the problem of authenticity. For Salim, life remains constantly insecure. He has an anxious feeling about his alienation where he understands that life in Africa is not stable and secure, even though he has achieved commercial success. He sees the fate of the Africans who live in fear of tribal clashes. In order to eradicate his fear, he makes a journey to London to see Nazruddin, who has learned the art of survival in an alien society. Through Nazruddin he comes to know, “the fluidity and ever-changing facet of the world” (Ganjewar 212).
Walking around London, Salim is shocked, because the city is saturated with non-native natives like him who have come to London in search of refuge from Africa but who have not found it. While the city gives them the opportunity to pursue their business objectives on a larger scale than Africa has done, it does not afford them complete freedom. The relationship the society establishes between them and the indigenous whites are much the same as the one the colonial situation maintained between them and Africans. They live on the margins of society which is cut off from the center of political life.

Like the modern man Salim inherits the existential problem and discovers meaninglessness not only in the external world but also within his innerself. Unlike Ralph in *The Mimic Men*, Salim is not close enough to exhibit the familiar colonial trauma, but he has his own version of the problem of identity. His search for personal identity counterpoints Africa’s authenticity and independence.

In his self-sought exile Salim discovers the ache of homelessness. Initially he comforts himself with the thought that he is only passing through the difficulties of exile, which later becomes his curse. Salim says, “I was waiting for some illumination to come to me, to guide me to the good place and the ‘life’ I was still waiting for” (*BR* 110). Not only the Asians in Africa, like Salim and Indar, but even the Africans themselves are dispossessed and homeless. His failure to find a solid home and the futility of his quest for order and identity eliminates the last hope of resistance against the Third World and also the last civilising traces of Western influence. However, the disorganised and disordered society of the town at the bend in the river does not provide any kind of fulfilment to Salim, Yvette, Raymond, Mahesh and Indar. They are all outsiders floating and lost without any definite identity of their own. Whereas, Zabeth, Ferdinand and Father Huismans are insiders who always try to adjust to the disturbing realities and live between
the old and the new regimes. Salim admits that his ambivalence and love-hate relationship with the ‘other’ has ultimately made his life more unstable and meaningless:

I was in Africa one day; I was in Europe the next morning. It was more than travelling fast. It was like being in two places at once. I woke up in London with little bits of Africa on me – like the airport tax ticket, given me by an official I knew, in the middle of another kind of crowd, in another kind of building, in another climate. Both places were real; both places were unreal. (BR 268)

This description is true not only of the Third World people but of the entire people in the twentieth century world. Moreover, Salim’s journey from place to place to place is also indicative of a long journey through life, through history and into a vicious circle of exile and loss. It is the ultimate loneliness of the modern man and the lack of resources in any of the civilised ideals and ideologies that may be of some help in the ordering of modern man’s life in a chaotic world. Serafin Roldan Santiago views that, “In Salim’s voice one can hear Naipaul’s personal views; but also one can hear other viewpoints: ideas that are gathered by the author from personal experiences, from his visits and tours, from his friends, even his enemies” (149).

Salim’s conviction echoes Naipaul’s own and represents the end of his own long quest, both in his personal life and in his work for home and root, in which he makes slender links with the past that will illuminate the dark present. D. J. Enright in a review of An Area of Darkness rightly comments that “Himself an expatriate, Naipaul has in the past inclined to sentimentalise ‘belonging’ by stressing the pains he supposes to derive from its loss. . . . Man left his roots in the Garden of Eden and in our self-pitying moments we know that we could never have stayed long or grown far in that innocent
changeless place” (62). Naipaul’s acute detachment from his characters is quite remarkable and the climax of the novel shows that neither of the characters is intended to succeed and each one is bound to face a disaster. Thus, Naipaul brilliantly presents the common destiny of the contemporary man and creates the personal, distinctive, self-aware, self-centered world of psychological crisis of postcolonial individuals.

The novel *Half a Life* “transcends the reader into that ‘half and half’ world of nowhereness where fullness remains a far off dream” (Vishnu 51). It is a story of “lost goals, unfulfilled aspirations and uninspiring half-lives. It is a story not of heroes or achievers, but ordinary mundane people who realize in the end, that their life has not been worth living” (Sathyananthan 137). It also revisits Naipaul’s favourite themes of exile and alienation, but with a very significant difference. Partly autobiographical, the novel analyses the pangs of the exiles; their half-life, their sense of alienation and their cultural traditions. The protagonist Willie Somerset Chandran, reminds us of Narayan’s Chandran in *The Bachelor of Arts* as he copes with his Mission school education in English medium. The tensions of inter-caste marriage and the lament of Willie’s father for his lost *Brahmcharya* are all Narayan territory.

Similarly, it is a story of the failed son of a failed idealist whose endless search for a home takes him across three continents, but he finds himself disconnected and overwhelmed with the sense of never belonging anywhere. Willie leads half-a-life through his pilgrim’s progress into the world of love in order to achieve a fullness of life. Naipaul describes Willie’s journey to find a place for himself in the world and his dilemma is that of a man who has to leave his background and find something else. Not only Willie, almost all the characters search for the fullness of their lives.
In the story of Willie, Naipaul focuses on the half-ness of his personality, the incompleteness of his life for all of which he is moved with despise for his father. Willie blames his father for the half-status that he has been accorded. He fails to see the dilemma of his father as a youth and he also does not realise that his father had become a victim to circumstances. Willie has tried to create an image for himself but he has got imprisoned in that image and has lost his identity completely.

Willie’s negation of self begins in his childhood itself. He is a son of a half rebel Brahmin father and a low-caste woman. Being a half Brahmin he cannot relate fully to the low-caste and being a low-caste mother’s son he is not completely and whole heartedly accepted in the Brahmin community. His awareness of his mother’s low-caste and the resultant low status of his father instil in him a sense of shame. As a result, he is moved with contempt for his father who has given him a half status in the society.

Right from birth, Willie has the sense of an incomplete life, due to the duality of his mixed heritage: “It spoils everything whether going to school in India or attempting sexual encounters with females in England” (Sanga 134). When he decides to search for a meaning in his life away from the settled passive life of his parents, he runs from one country to another to define and reinvent himself, yet wherever he goes, he is painfully reminded of the country that he came from. To this point Bijay Kumar Das in Critical Essays on Post-Colonial Literature aptly says that, “In reality one can take a person out of his country but not the country out of his mind” (41). According to Seema Srivastava and Poornima Anil, Willie abundantly inherits the collective unconsciousness of the Indian ethos, in which, “He strives to find but not to yield in the nature of his inward journey into the half-and half world, and is confused through the suffering and alienation” (214).
Willie’s mind is full of thoughts of the hopelessness of home and his own nebulous present. The sense of historicity keeps haunting him wherever he goes and whatever he does. His sexual extremes in remote corner of the world are nothing but attempts at self-discovery. He begins to realise the irony of his father’s plight and feels blankness in everything and also feels that, “This blankness is one of the things I have got from my mother’s side” (*HL* 55). Cut off from his roots and culture, he aimlessly floats like a survivor of a shipwreck trying to find security, but finds none anywhere.

Knowing fully that his hybrid existence cannot give him breathing space, especially in India where caste is everything and disenchanted with his earlier ambition of becoming a missionary by his education in a Mission School, “He began to long to go to Canada, where his teachers came from. He even began to think he might adopt their religion and become like them and travel the world teaching” (*HL* 39). He secures a scholarship and leaves for London where he lives the Bohemian immigrant life of the late 1950’s. Naipaul views his early life in London through Willie:

> Willie fails right at the beginning, in London in the 1950s, where he, inexperienced and an immigrant as Naipaul was himself, roams the streets in rain or fog until, out of the blue, he stumbles across a freelancing job with the BBC, as, what coincidence, Naipaul also did. Unlike Naipaul, however, Willie is not very decisive; nor does he have the will to use his talent to pursue the presumptuous as well as vague wish to become a writer.

(Leusmann 65)

In London, Willie comes in contact with many friends but cannot adapt to the culture of that place. In spite of all his efforts to get into the new environment, Willie is overtaken by the feeling of alienation. He thinks, “I don’t know where I am. I don’t think I
can pick my way back. I don’t ever want this view to become familiar. I must not unpack. I must never behave as though I am staying” (*HL* 135). He suffers from alienation and emptiness – a sense of being without history or understanding, the difficulty of a writer to find material and his shocking sexual encounters. He sleeps with prostitutes and friends’ girl friends only to discover his own sexual incompetence. He realises that his own failures mirror those of his father’s and that these personal failures mirror the failure of colonialism.

The cultural as well as social conflicts that Willie undergoes in London and Mozambique take its roots in cultural alienation. Rooted from his own cultural tradition, he fails to establish any fulfilling relationship through his escape from caste and class. Willie’s friend Percy Cato too is leading a half life and has no proper place to stay. Both friends belong to the same background. Willie has not really known what to make of a man “who appeared to have no proper place in the world” (*HL* 62).

Willie’s mixed inheritance spoilt everything. He feels like a stranger even in his wife’s estate house and says, “It may be because of something in our culture that, in spite of appearances, men are really looking for women to lean on” (*HL*141). He wants to discover some purpose in life through his sensual associations and sexual encounters in Ana’s Africa. His submission to sexual desire is, “wholy believable for the very reason that he has previously been stunted into half life by the constrictions of caste in India and class in England, Africa releases him into sensuality” (Kamra 39).

While travelling to Ana’s African country from Southampton, Willie’s mind is occupied by the confusion that such frequent changes in the setting lead to forget his English, the language of his stories. The loss of proper language becomes even more ironical in view of the fact that Willie is an emerging writer and a writer’s very existence
is dependent on his language. “Language is originally and essentially nothing but a system of signs or symbols, which donate real occurrences or their echo in the human soul” (Jung 17). Drifting away from one place to another, from one continent to another, Willie feels he is going to lose his languages: “The learning he was being given was like the food he was eating, without savour. The two were inseparable in his mind. And just as he ate without pleasure, so, with a kind of blindness, he did what the lecturers and tutors asked of him, read the books and articles and did the essays. He was unanchored, with no idea of what lay ahead” (HL 58).

In Africa, he saw life as rich and exciting, later he realises, “Darkness here was darkness” (HL 173). Ana’s company allows him room to breathe and push back the shadow of inadequacy. Both Willie and Ana realise that exile is a half-life and they do not have more of a personal life. Willie is pre-occupied with varieties of experience in the explosive and disconcerting realities of half-London, half-Portuguese and half-and-half world with their different linguistic cultural ecologies, sociological hues and nostalgia.

Willie’s “state of statelessness” (qtd. in Sathyananthan 140) is brought out in the end, when he ends up as a failure, missing his goal and wasting half of his life in futile pursuits. His travels to England and Africa bring him too many characters who are leading half-lives as exiles. His struggle for existence never comes to an end. He thinks that “… he would never be able to start up on his own; the local rich people controlled everything and didn’t allow the poor man to live” (HL 209). Hence, Willie seems to be a part of Arjun Appadurai’s ‘ethnoscope’: “The landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups of individuals who make up the instabilities within the seemingly stable global
system” (549). His search is not an escape but an ordering of the chaos and recognition that fulfilment comes only through time and change and not time outside.

In the end, Willie decides to start a new life, no longer desiring to live under Ana’s protection. He rethinks his life and decides to face challenges of the future without attempting to escape or withdraw. He remarkably rebuilds his identity and finds placelessness as a kind of placeness. He is caught in in-betweenness and he also enjoys the third space. In his self sought exile, Willie becomes a nomad. Vijay Mishra in *Literature of the Indian Diaspora* claims that Naipaul’s diaspora and nomadism are “primarily traumatic conditions that have the function of compulsion repetition” (107).

The half-lives led by people in colonial and postcolonial countries are reflected through Willie. These people hopelessly try to find order and meaning in their lives. They move from town to town, house to house and job to job. The final responsibility of order lies with the individual and not with the society, the chaos lies all within and the escape is finally not from society but from the self. Thus, through the life of Willie and other characters, Naipaul puts forward the view that displacement and alienation are a universal predicament in the postcolonial world. Willie’s life is not determined by economic, political or social difficulties, but by his inability to find his own identity and thus his place in the world. This is the real critical condition of every immigrant in the world.

Thus, the novel *Half a Life* presents a more optimistic attitude toward the future than the previous ones. Like his father, Willie is seeking his own home in the world; he constructs a home for himself through his creative writing. He constructs his own subjectivity via the powerful writing. Breytenbach discusses the relationship between writing and identity: “The individual creative act is certainly an attempt to make consciousness. This implies drawing upon memory. Memory, whether apocryphal or not,
provides the feeding ground or the requisite space allowing for the outlining of imagination” (qtd. in Bhushan 23).

As an exiled writer, Naipaul is caught in in-betweeness: writing between home and homelessness, he takes advantage of being an exile to create his own space, his own home, one which is simultaneously nowhere and everywhere. Through the geographical imagination of his writing, Naipaul creates a home for himself. He makes an effort to resist the sense of insecurity and uncertainty. Thus, in terms of postcolonial perspectives, Willie in Half a Life just like “Naipaul himself has the unfixed identity in the construction of subjectivity though he must experience the ruptures among subjectivity, geography, and language toward multicultural and fluid identity” (Bhushan 24).

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. Most of his protagonists are crude eccentrics, who live under great stress and tension, painfully aware of personal failures and nurturing a fear of losing status and identity. The situations in which they are placed threaten to diminish rather than enhance their potential for creative action. They represent a world which is not moved by love but dominated by greed, conflict and futility.

Naipaul’s heroes, who strive hard for existence, appear to have discovered some values of life – love, nobility, dignity and authenticity. They are unable to find the order they have been searching for in London, rather they found themselves into greater disorder. Ralph attempts all possibilities but nowhere does he find his authentic self and so fails and the result is mental suffering. Both Ganesh and Ralph change their names, but in case of Ganesh it is symbolic of the total rejection of Hinduism in order to gain material benefits, whereas Ralph justifies it as a Hindu custom. They face defeats,
deformations and violations in their journey to find their true identity. Their journey often proves to be the journey of rejection. However, at the end they meet their moment of reality. Through his characters, Naipaul shows how in the final moment man has to rely on his own personal strength and resources.

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 fact, their difficult journey has been pushed roughly and ended abruptly due to their feeling of alienation. They seek refuge under the wings of white women. They wanted white women as their lovers but their relationship has never been out of love; it has been for power. In that state of self-dejection and desperation they have the aspiration to be like the white men “Out of the darkest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly white. I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white” (Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks 63). They feel the ‘whiteness’ of the white women would make them elevate their positions in the society. Being loved by white women would make them worthy of love and superior in their own eyes. Even, their own judgment about themselves has been built by the ‘whiteness’ of white women. Fanon writes:

Who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man. Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization . . . I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine. (Black Skin, White Masks 63)
Even if they are loved by the white women, they do not believe it because they take themselves as unworthy of love for granted. They have faced so much humiliation that it becomes impossible for them to accept that they too can be loved, “the abandonment-neurotic” demands proofs (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 76).

In *The Mimic Men*, Ralph’s marriage with Sandra is not because he loves her, but because he “tend[s] to marry in Europe not so much out of love as for the satisfaction of being the master of a European woman; and a certain tang of proud revenge enters into this” (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 69). In *A Bend in the River*, it is in the new domain that Salim first realises his attraction towards whiteness. Everything about the Europeans attracts Salim, “Everything was imported; everything was expensive” (*BR* 196). He wants to elevate himself in the society through Yvette. The experiences are all as Fanon describes, “to gratify the need of the men of color for white women” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 72). The hunger of being white, Salim has used ‘white’ repeatedly to describe his state of mind: “In that room with the window panes painted white, a white that now glowed” (*BR* 204), because, “Whiteness, has become a symbol of purity, of Justice, Truth, Virginity. It defines what it means to be civilized, modern and human . . . Blackness represents the diametrical opposite: in the collective unconsciousness, it stands for ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality. Even the dictionary definition of white means clean and pure” (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 33).

Salim’s affair with Yvette offers to him the possibility of a new life, but he derives no fulfilment through sexual encounter. It is more of a psychological process rather than imposing superiority, therefore, it affirms Fanon’s observation, “I found that the dominant concern among those arriving in France was to go to bed with a white woman. Once this ritual of initiation into ‘authentic’ manhood had been fulfilled, they took the train for
Paris” (*Black Skin, White Masks* 72). Salim finds his relationship with Yvette not empowering anymore. He understands that Yvette cannot empower him, nor can she secure him in Africa. She is tangled in her own life. Salim is an escape for Yvette from her dull life with Raymond, but Salim is all alone and again abandoned. He regrets his relationship as a waste of time. He says, “And failure like that wasn’t what I would have chosen to be entangled with. My wish for an adventure with Yvette was a wish to be taken up to the skies, to be removed from the life I had . . . It wasn’t a wish to be involved with people as trapped as myself” (*BR* 215). Therefore, Salim does not find a place for himself even under the wings of white woman. Thus, he keeps on floating as an outsider.

Movement from one place to another has disrupted the familiar social order of all the protagonists. They have abandoned the sanctions and narrow loyalties in their native countries. They find themselves in situations which emphasises their weakness and expose them to risk. Time does not alleviate their alienation or their vulnerability. They recognise their failure to integrate into their present communities. At the same time, they acknowledge that a return journey to their homeland is impossible. This dilemma gives way to the sense of doom for them.

Ganesh in *The Mystic Masseur* and Ralph in *The Mimic Men* fail to have faith even in their family members. Ralph becomes the instrument of his failure. The failure of marriage awakens the fear of unreality in Ralph, “. . . it was the fear of the man who feels the veils coming down one by one, muffling his deepest responses, and panics at not being able to tear down the unreality about him to get at the hard, the concrete, where everything becomes simple and ordinary and easy to seize” (*MM* 75). Even the Roman house under construction in Crippleville could in no way cement his cracking marital life. The
Hanuman house in *A House for Mr. Biswas* brings the family together, whereas, the
Roman house in *The Mimic Men* cannot bring the couple together.

The pathos of exile and futility of the search for identity appear as irreconcilable
existential problems of the modern world. In his “Two Worlds: Nobel Lecture December
7, 2001” Naipaul says, “The world is always in movement. People have everywhere at
some time been dispossessed” (Ray 6). He is very pessimistic about the colonized people’s
ability to come to grip with their situation and to derive value from their own worth and
position in the world, and for Naipaul, “it is essentially a fantasy of displaced culture”
(Angrosino 7).

Almost all the characters in Naipaul’s novels, struggle for existence, but fail to find
protection or completeness. His protagonist is not only a “stranger but an orphan,
unrelated, in a world of relationships, of which he is keenly aware” (Kamra 22). Naipaul
presents young people with all the promise of a fulfilling creative life turning sour for, in
whichever direction they turn, they discover their dreams to be insubstantial. In turning
away, they break their connections with a known, though unrealised world. Like Beckett’s
*Waiting for Godot*, they are waiting for redemption.

Naipaul, through satire and irony, tries to instill in the psyches of the once
colonised people a sense of alienation in the form of normlessness. Thus, he thinks that
they will be able to leap into a phase of creativity which will consequently supply them
with original and authentic identities of their own. In the process of identity formation,
however, Naipaul may denounce his West Indian home and identity. Through his travels,
Naipaul translates himself into a hybridised postcolonial person, who is shaped by multiple
hybrid locations and most importantly, due to his mimicry of Western culture, sensibility,
life-style and manners, where he attempts to redefine his position and identity. Later,