Chapter 1. EXILE AND THE LOSS OF SELF UNDER COLONIALISM

1.1 Concept of Exile

As has been stated in the introduction, in the readings of commonwealth literature, particularly of the countries of which the native population is non-British in stock and has been ruled by the British, one realizes that the 'identity crisis' and its resolution seem to be the major preoccupation with the writers. These writers depict a society groping in the dark, which finds it difficult to come to terms with the reality around it. These writers do not represent the modernist figure of an artist who has severed himself from society and has opted to live on its fringe as typified by Stephen Dedalus. On the contrary, they mirror 'a collective problem' in the resolution of which they have constantly engaged themselves. 'The identity crisis' or 'the loss of self' is discussed by almost every significant writer on the African and the Caribbean scene.

In India the situation is not radically different though this does not seem to be the major preoccupation of Indian writers in English. The loss of self on the part of these writers as well as on the part of the fictional characters they create is invariably related to 'the colonial past'. This phenomenon - the feeling of uprootedness and discomfort as a common, collective experience - has been termed as 'exile' in this dissertation.
At this point it would be interesting to note what George Lamming, the well-known Caribbean novelist (who uses 'exile' as the subject of most of his novels) has to say about this feeling of exile as part of the West Indian's life:

"The exile" is a universal figure. The proximity of our lives to the major issues of our time has demanded of us all some kind of involvement. Some may remain neutral, but all have, at least to pay attention to what is going on. On a political level we are often without the right kind of information to make argument effective; on the moral level we have to feel our way through problems for which we have no adequate reference of traditional conduct as a guide: Chaos is often, therefore, the result of our thinking and our irrelevance of function in a society whose past we can't alter and whose future is always beyond us.(1)

Exile is a state of mind, caused by physical and/or psychological departure from one's homeland and everything it stands for. Here the aspect of physicality is less important than the psychological aspect. Mere physical departure may not cause a sense of 'exile'. A person who goes away from his homeland may take his homeland within him if his roots are intact. On the other hand a person may continue to live in his homeland and yet may experience a deep sense of exile. Rama, the protagonist of 'The Serpent and the Rope' belongs to the first category whereas Ralph Singh, the protagonist of 'The Mimic Men' belongs to the second.

In the real life situation, Ngugi wa Thiong'o who has been a political exile since 1984, is an example of the first type. Nirad Chaudhuri, who was born and brought up in
India and lived here till he was 55 and all through this period yearned for English culture (and England) is of the second.

A parallel example bringing out yet another aspect of this sense of exile - namely a wish to escape from one's own ethos because of a deep sense of shame and insecurity, till ultimately one reaches the point of a total rejection of it, in preference to another ethos received as a 'superior ethos'. Such an instance can be found in the life of Merle Oberon, the Calcutta-born famous Hollywood actress. In the case of Merle Oberon there was a successful rejection of her Indian ancestry and identity and complete assimilation of the Euro-American culture. (2)

Sri Aurobindo's is another interesting case from this point of view. A relentless effort on the part of Sri Aurobindo's father Krishnadhan Ghose to reject his culture was completely thwarted by his rebellious son who sought a spiritual homecoming to India. (3)

There are many in whose case the sense of exile is an outcome of their upbringing in the colonial or neo-colonial situation. It is not a matter of choice, at least, for many of them. This sense of exile provides the subject matter for many African and West Indian novels, plays and poems. It may lead to homecoming in the case of some writers at individual or/and collective level. There are, however, a few who remain in a state of exile and come to accept it as their natural state.
1.2 White and Non-White Colonies

While I assert that this peculiar sense of exile is a product of the colonial situation, I am fully aware of the difficulty in defining the term 'colonial'. It is ambiguous and used to refer to the colonies which are 'dominions' and also to the countries which were annexed to the British empire as an outcome of its expansion. In the present dissertation these are termed the white and the non-white colonies respectively.

In the white colonies such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and America, the Europeans (the British for the present purpose) went in a body and inhabited the lands. For them the departure from their homelands was physical initially but also psychological as the experience of colonizing the new land slowly grew on them. In Prof. Gerald Moore's words:

This great expansion of the English speaking peoples beyond their native island led to the establishment in North America, Australia, New Zealand and parts of South Africa of large communities who not only share English as mother tongue but remained for a long time British in stock, in culture and in orientation.(4)

For those who migrated to these new countries the landscape seemed to have a romantic aura. Many of them cherished a dream of going back 'home' for a long time. Facing the new landscape, the previously unknown aspects of primitive and hostile 'nature', the absence of social life which they could have enjoyed in the homeland, must have generated a feeling of loneliness and alienation. Obviously they found it rather difficult to come to terms with the
reality around them as the literature in these countries reflecting the first few phases of colonization illustrates. The sense of exile caused by displacement from the homeland was no doubt a characteristic feature of early colonization. The development of the literatures in these countries is the history of the initial extension of European culture to the white colonies, a gradual severance with indigenous culture and a growing awareness about it. The children and the grandchildren of the original immigrants found their roots in the new land and made these lands their homes. This process took place more or less smoothly because their parents and grandparents had come to these lands with 'a positive identity' (5) (The convicts were an exception.) This helped to bring about changes in the whole process of overcoming their 'sense of exile'. The psychological acceptance of the new land was slow but sure because 'the loss of self' was completely retrievable. Again there was no journey from negation to acceptance of their homeland but only a realization at some stage that they had left their homeland for good and the new countries were now their home.

The exile experienced by those in non-white colonies was totally different in every respect. These people never left their homeland but were ruled over by the Europeans (the British in the present context) and had to undergo the colonial experience of a shameful kind which led initially to the surrender of so many aspects of their culture and
ultimately to the 'surrender of identity', to use yet another term coined by Erik Erikson. This was a complex twofold process, 'a necessary evil' in the eyes of the colonizer. In the non-white colonies like Africa and India the people had to surrender their culture, their language and their entire way of life (in Africa, even their religion). This led to the negation of the native culture and of their own selves as the products of the culture which was thought to be 'inferior' and, therefore, degrading. It is this sense of exile that looms large in the early literary experiments in English by the writers in India, and in many African countries.

The West Indies hold a unique position in this group of countries. In the case of the West Indies there was both physical and psychological displacement. Unlike the white settlers in the white colonies the ancestors of today's West Indians were brought to the islands by the force of circumstance. They were slaves or indentured labourers. They were the victims of plantocracy - the creation of the machinations of capitalists. The trauma of the experience was so great that there was nothing of their 'positive identity' left in them. The sense of negation was extremely strong because they had to surrender the essence of their original culture and adopt new names, a new language, a new religion and a new way of life which gave them an inferior status. Even the physical reality around them enhanced the feeling of negation as the land they worked on was not only indifferent to their toil and they did not own it. (A
cammun with the soil through their sensory perceptions was perhaps their only solace). What was left them of their own original culture was nothing but fragmented, fossilized relics. They were also deprived of the deep sense of security that springs from sharing the life of the community.

Initially, on most of the Caribbean islands (slave islands as they were called) the slaves suffered a complete loss of freedom as human beings. They were given Latin, English, Spanish, French names and surnames and were treated as animals or chattel. (Very often they were given the names of Anglo-Saxon kings or Roman generals as Browne informs Ralph Singh in Naipaul's, The Mimic Men (7). Browne's actual name is Ethelbert whereas his father's name is Caezar. Many of these names, incidentally, resemble the names given to pet dogs.) Institutions like education, religion and the judiciary which are the basis of civilisation and are essential for the development of a close-knit community were virtually absent in the days of slavery. Thus the inter-related network of relationships collapsed. The ones that were established after the legal emancipation of slaves were patterned after the British, Spanish or the French institutions. This meant the introduction of Christianity and of the educational patterns which were a crude replica of the British pattern. Under such circumstances it became imminent for the people to surrender their identity for the sake of survival.
1.3 Creation of the Colonial Mindset

At this point it is essential to analyse the devices used by the colonizer to create a colonial mindset.

The main device used by the colonizer to create the psychological conditioning of the colonized which would be conducive to the colonial mindset has been variously named as 'pseudologia' (9), 'the hoax of colonialism', etc. This process established a myth about the colonizer and the colonized which made the 'colonized' accept the colonizer as a 'superman' - a strong, industrious, charitable, superior individual. The counterpoint of this was the colonized's acceptance of himself as a lazy, weak, ungrateful and inferior person. The colonizer and the colonized's acceptance of this myth as the truth was at the core of the perpetuation of the colonial situation. This prevailed in almost all the non-white colonies including the West Indies. For the West Indian, however the retrieval of the surrendered identity was even more problematic because in the West Indies there was an amalgam of the relics of the African, Indian, European and Chinese cultures, language structures, religious beliefs, etc. Chris Searle rightly observes this fact in the introduction to his very perceptive study of 'the educational process in the West Indies' titled *The Forsaken Lover, White Words and Black People*. 'The West Indian probably has a greater problem of identity than most other people.' (10) He goes on to reveal the real dilemma of a West Indian child on the basis of his observations as a school teacher. He states:
The real dilemma of the West-Indian child who finds, while growing towards adolescence a structure of meaningful, wider belongingness beyond his relationship with himself and his family, some supporting social strength in which he can trust, missing. In addition to this fundamental requirement which is if at all only partially fulfilled, he has to integrate his own life-cycle within the changing state of his country's political identity.(11)

In short, the state of confusion and anguish in which the West Indian found and still finds himself was largely the result of his 'double negation'. The West Indian's old identity was one of limitation, subservience and alienation, cutting him off from himself and his own dignity. He could not anchor himself within his own milieu, his own world in order to shape his own identity. This temporary 'floundering' was an outcome of the colonial situation in which he was trapped.

The multi faceted theme of exile in colonial literature is directly related to the colonial reality and is the necessary end product of the colonial 'consciousness. The creation of the colonized's mind-set works through two stages

1) Introduction of the colonizer's culture, an alien culture and a ruler's culture at various levels and through various means.

2) Fascination for that culture on the part of the native.

Introduction of the colonizer's culture to the colonies was in a way inevitable. Considering the fact that
the colonizer's physical presence in the non-white colonies was limited to a few emissaries, administrative officers, priests, etc. The imposition of his culture at all levels (political, economic, psychological, spiritual, etc.) became a necessity for the colonizer. Since colonization was a capitalistic venture, 'progress' became the key concept behind all colonization activities particularly in the 19th century. In India, where colonization started in the 18th century, the early years of the British rule (1757-1830) saw very little domination of the British middle class. In Prof. Ashis Nandy's words:

British culture in India was still not politically dominant and race-based evolutionism was still inconspicuous in the ruling culture. Most Britons in India lived like Indians at home and in the office, wore Indian dress and observed Indian customs and religious practices. A large number of them married Indian women, offered puja to Indian gods and goddesses and lived in fear and awe of the magical powers of the Brahmans. (12)

After the flowering of the middle class British evangelical spirit, cultural meanings were ascribed to the British domination. This was when the process of creating the colonial mindset began. Thus after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 though there was a second phase of 'tolerance' of Indian culture, as Lewis D. Wurgaft puts it 'this new cultural relativism clearly drew a line between Indian culture seen as infantile and immoral and the culture of the British public school products: austere, courageous, self-controlled, adult men'. (13)

In Africa where colonization started in the 19th century itself and was almost complete by the 1870's in most
of the areas except Liberia and Ethiopia, administration and religion became two important tools in establishing the colonizer-colonized relationship. Africans would be treated as crypto-barbarians who needed to civilize themselves and who would see the British rule as an 'agent' of progress. This set in the process of cultural cooptation termed as 'identification with the aggressor' in psycho-analysis. To quote Ashis Nandy, 'The process became the flip side of the theory of progress, an ontogenetic legitimacy for the ego defence'. (14) On the part of the rulers the internalization of the (given) roles by the colonizer and the natives was necessary at all levels because for them colonial exploitation was an incidental and regrettable by-product of a philosophy of life, which was in harmony with superior forms of political and economic organization. This was necessary for the rulers because they could not rule large areas like India and Africa while considering themselves to be moral cripples. They had to yield to the pseudologia regarding the 'function' of colonization in order to suppress the sense of guilt produced by the disjunction between actions and what were till then, in terms of important norms of their culture, their 'true' values. This is the way in which minimum self-esteem could be preserved in a situation of unavoidable injustice. The main requirement for the creation of this pseudologia was that the counterplayer accepts the role given to him. (Of course the entire process of the mutual acceptance of the roles may
not have been a conscious one). As a result of the role given to the colonized he was seen as either childish or childlike. The 'childlike' ones were ignorant and innocent but willing to learn. They were masculine and loyal to the colonizer's effort. They, would thus be 'reformed' through westernization, modernization or Christianization or by all three. The ones who were not eager to learn inspite of being ignorant were stamped as childish and were said to be ungrateful, savage, disloyal and unpredictably violent. They were to be repressed by controlling rebellion, ensuring internal peace and providing tough administration and the rule of law. The literary prototypes of the childlike and the childish are Ariel and Caliban respectively in Shakespeare's The Tempest whereas that of the colonizer is Prospero.(15) No wonder that the Caliban image looms large in the consciousness of both the colonized Africans and West Indians.

The devices through which this was achieved were -

1) Introduction of the white man's language and educational system.

2) Introduction of the new religion (Christianity in the present context).

3) Introduction of a new economic set up and a capitalistic pattern of society (utilitarian liberalism).

4) Introduction of a different administrative and political set-up.

5) On the whole introduction of a different culture as an alternative.
1.4 Language and Educational System

Before analysing how these devices were responsible for the colonial mind set it would be necessary to see how Africa was introduced to Western civilization through the 17th and the 18th centuries.

European trade and commerce in Africa were certainly not a 19th century phenomenon. It had taken place through the 17th, 18th and the early 19th centuries. The political interest and the colonization started in the 19th century. Thus the introduction of the administrative and political set-up was new to the Africans at large. Many kingdoms like Songhai, Mali, Chaka, Timbuctu, Ashanti had flourished in different parts of Africa at different times from the 17th to the 19th centuries. The defeat of these kings and finally of Asantihene in 1893 stamped the Europeans - the British in Anglophone Africa as the master race. The acceptance of the British as rulers by those who were earlier ruled by African Ṱụnọgha did the first damage. The British who could defeat their rulers were far superior in their eyes and they themselves far inferior. In Africa there were many tribal areas which were under the control of the village heads and/or of priests. With the establishment of the British administration and the colonial rule the people in these areas segregated into categories of those who accepted the new set up and those who resisted it.

Kenya and some parts of Nigeria provide a concrete example of the process. The economy was agricultural and
pastoral in both the countries. Medicine men, priests of the local anthropomorphic gods, war heroes, titled men from among whom the village heads were normally chosen, were the chief guardians of the tribes or the clans. In Nigeria, there was no private proprietization of land and no taxation. In Kenya though there were land owners the land was tax free. The education was informal and practical, the nature of fine arts was highly functional and administration was indirectly in the hands of people.

After colonization this world of experience began to undergo a rapid change. In Anglophone Africa these colonies became part of the British Empire and the people had to accept the rule of Queen Victoria. The administrative set up introduced by the British was totally alien to them. So was the ruler's language and the newly introduced educational pattern. Simultaneously or may be a little earlier the evangelical or the presbyterian missionaries introduced a puritanical brand of Christianity. All this resulted in the disintegration of a homogenous and stable way of life which the Africans had enjoyed for generations. In its place there was a deep sense of insecurity, inadequacy and inferiority.

One of the most important factors to have had a lasting impact on the mind of the colonized is the introduction of formal education through the colonizer's language. In the colonies the main aim behind the spread of education was to keep the administrative and bureaucratic machinery functioning. (The heritage of the people died.) Very few children however, got admitted to schools. But the
ones who received that education were fed on the history of Queen Elizabeth, Oliver Cromwell and Magna Carta and not on the history of the Empires in their own country. The heroes of their land suddenly became non-entities. The school books unfolded to them a world of which they knew nothing. In the school books the little boy was John and not Njoroge, Ashok, etc. and the little girl Mary and not Mumbi or Durga. The structures of the English language were new to them. They were in awe of this language and scared of the method of education. The entire educational activity alienated them and still alienates them from their own environment by introducing the world of the master race which is on the border line of reality and fantasy in the psyche of the colonized children. The English language has its roots in the English ethos which is so different from the African, the West Indian or the Indian ethos. Chris Searle (an Englishman, already mentioned) who spent a year as a high school teacher at Tobago as late as 1971-72 offers a very sensitive and intuitive analysis of the paradoxical situation which continued in the West Indies well after decolonization. The situation forced the black man to use the white man’s language impeccably. The Forsaken Lover, is a short account of Searle’s experiences as a school teacher. The preface to this book written by a fourteen year old black boy from Stepney brings out the deep impact that the white man’s language has on shaping the psyche of black children from Africa and the West Indies. He writes:
Black has gone far beyond a word merely representing a colour. The Oxford English Dictionary says as much about man’s inhumanity to man and the complex insidious ways in which the white world has dominated and mystified the black. Some of the meanings and associations under the word ‘black’ in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (widely used in schools) are: deadly, threatening, implying disgrace or condemnation, discredited, corrupt. The same dictionary has the following associations under the word ‘white’: innocent, unstained, of harmless kind, integrity, person of honourable character, good breeding, clean appearance.

The white man devised a language based on words and symbols which protected himself and advertised his belief in the primacy of his colour. When he promotes that language to a non-white people, it is a way of breaking apart the identity of the people, dividing them from themselves and subjecting them to white values and political thinking which are assimilated and expressed through that language.

This entire phenomenon of alienating the black and brown children from their own ethos and creating a deep inferiority complex in their minds through education has found expression in many literary works of the West Indian and African writers in English.

V. S. Naipaul’s, A House for Mr. Biswas describes at length the schooling of the Trinidadian children at the hands of one Mr. Lal, himself a convert to presbyterianism, and working as a teacher in the Canadian mission school. Children are normally flogged with a tamarind rod and are taught history and geography not even remotely connected with their actual life.

Due to poverty many children are in borrowed,
incongruously ill-fitting clothes and are made fun of by the snobbish teacher. Ralph Singh, the protagonist of Naipaul's semi-autobiographical novel, The Mimic Men is a classic example of a personality warped through education. In the second chapter he reminisces that at Isabella it was a disgrace to be poor when he was a child. In the same chapter he goes on to tell us in a highly clinical manner that for him his own childhood was a period of incompetence, bewilderment, solitude and shameful fantasia. It is a period of burdensome secrets. Ralph Singh's first memory of school is of taking 'an apple' to the teacher though apples were not grown at Isabella. 'An apple' instead of an avocado or an orange has entered his psyche as a fruit which is to be presented to the teacher. He also remembers that his own reaction to inadequacy was to complicate the matters further as he did when he changed his name Ranjit Kripal Singh to Ralph Singh. He continued to sign as R. Singh for four years. The fascination for the anglicization of the name was quite apparent. The school children had a deep sense of shame for the ordinariness of their background. Ralph Singh sums up the children's reaction to these conflicting projections of reality by saying that they had converted their island into a big secret. 'Anything that touched ordinary life always excited laughter when it was mentioned in the classroom: the name of a shop, the name of a street, the name of street corner, foods.'(19) They denied the landscape and the people they could see from the open doors and windows of the school. Narrating the story of his friend
Hoc, a rather handsome mulatto boy who had to go and wish his ordinary looking black mother as she passed along the street while the P. T. parade was on, Ralph Singh observes that Hoc actually wept after the incident and he wept because the act was a betrayal into ordinariness. He was expelled from that private hemisphere of fantasy where lay his "true" life. However, Ralph's own secret world of fantasy was of the Rajputs and Aryans in which he was the 'promised' leader, shipwrecked on a remote island. All this was the outcome of the educational process - this severe sense of displacement leading to 'identity confusion'.

The acquisition of language skills is like a hurdle race for many African children who are unaccustomed to the sounds and structures of the English language, as well as to the Roman script. This has been beautifully illustrated in the fifth chapter of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's, Weep Not Child. (21)

Many of these works refer to the celebrations of the Empire Day in the colonies, particularly in the colonial schools. Lamming's, In the Castle of My Skin describes such a celebration at a Presbyterian church school in Barbados. The school was 'the pride and treasure of the Empire' according to the school inspector who is an Englishman. The head teacher declares that pennies would be distributed on this occasion and adds, 'Queen Victoria was a wise queen and she would have you spend it wisely.' At this point a loud
giggle is heard from a corner of the school. After the departure of the Englishman, the head teacher catches hold of the boy and flogs him hard with a leather strap. The agony makes the boy spoil his pants. But in the conversation that follows among the school children the cause of the giggle is revealed. One of the boys wished to know whether the Queen's bloomers were red, white or blue. (22) Obviously the Empire Day as well as the queen's wisdom have no relevance for him. With an adolescent's curiosity he looks upon the queen as 'a mere woman'. (23) Memmi observes in his, The Colonizer and the Colonized:

the colonized is saved from illiteracy only to fall in linguistic dualism. The entire bureaucracy, the entire court system, all industry hears and uses the colonizer's language. Likewise, highway markings, railroad signs, street signs and receipts make the colonized feel like a foreigner in his own country. At school, the teacher and school represent a world which is too different from his family environment. Far from preparing the adolescent to find himself completely, school creates a permanent dualism in him. (23)

1.5 Religion

In the colonial situation, the colonized adult accepts being an oppressed creature and either looks upon his native religion for 'refuge value' or is fascinated by the colonizer's religion - i.e. Christianity. For him, as an individual the traditional religion is the rare path of retreat. For the group it is one of the rare manifestations which can protect original existence. 'Religious formalism', according to Memmi:
is the cyst into which colonial society shuts itself and hardens, degrading its life in order to save it. It is a spontaneous action of self-defense, a means of safeguarding the collective consciousness without which a people quickly cease to exist. (24) 

As Memmi further observes, all religions have moments of coercive formality and moments of indulgent flexibility. But the missionaries depict the formality as an essential feature of the non-Christian religions and offer Christianity as the possible escape. Actual conversion may or may not take place, but this leads to psychological disruption. (25) One can see that Christianity has had a deep impact on the psychology of the colonized. In India where a tolerant religion like Hinduism was firmly anchored there were no large scale conversions in many areas. But Christianity was seen and felt as a possible 'threat' (a counterpart of 'escape'). Among the educated who were directly or indirectly exposed to the Christian doctrine there was a fascination for its monotheistic character and a sense of shame for polytheism. One has a feeling that the movements of religious reforms like 'the Brahmo samaj', 'Prarthana samaj' and 'Arya samaj' were inspired by Christianity with regard to the doctrine of brotherhood as the source of inspiration.

In Africa where native forms of religions based on 'animism' were practised in many areas sometimes Christianity came to be looked upon as a possible escape from the rigidity of the native religion. Nwoye, Okonkwo's son in Things Fall Apart is attracted to Christianity
because he cannot tolerate customs like throwing the newly
born twins in the bush or the 'sacrifice' of a boy who is a
hostage. He revolts against the cruelty of his native
customs and embraces Christianity. (26) But later in life he
does not allow his son to marry Clara. She is 'an Osu' - a
girl from a community which is ostracized - the entire
community being dedicated to the God according to the native
tradition. (27)

Ironically again, the brand of Christianity to reach
Africa, Presbyterianism and Evangelism was not any less
authoritarian and rigid. Joshua, one of the early converts
of the Siriana Mission in Ngugi was Thiong'o's *The River
Between* is not only a die hard believer in the authority of
God but himself an authoritarian. He opposes his daughter
Muthoni's circumcision because it is a pagan rite. Muthoni
herself thinks that she can attain her full womanhood only
by following this Gikuyu custom which need not conflict with
Christianity. She gets circumcised, dies of infection and
this ultimately leads to the disintegration of the
tribe. (28)

The works of Soyinka, Ngugi, Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah
are full of tensions created by the introduction of
Christianity. In polygamous Africa the basic cultural
pattern was threatened by the new religion. Wherever
Christianity was accepted conversion was seen as a kind of
entry into the white man's magic world. But 'assimilation'
with that world was never made possible by the colonizer.
That is how Christianity helped the imperialistic designs of
the colonizer. 'Christian brotherhood' never became a reality due to the feeling of superiority on the part of the whites. Resultantly the Africans also did not discard their native customs totally but continued to practise them in a modified form.

In the West Indies where no formal religion of any 'one' kind was practised by the community at large, the introduction of Christianity with its formal and moralistic aspects created problems in the otherwise elastic lives of people. There are two accounts, both comic as well as pathetic in Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*. The novel shows how the interference of religion results in the tragic end of two happy negro families in the countryside of Barbados.

In the first account Jon and Susie have been living together till Jon decides to join 'Free for all Brethren' and starts making much about Jen, brother Bannister's daughter. However, when he impregnates her he is threatened with his life to marry her as 'a good Christian'. Susie insists that he should marry her if at all he is going to marry. He promises to marry both but is unable to do so as a Christian. Ultimately, he hides between two gravestones where he is found dead. But for the interference of the formal religion he could have lived happily with both the women.

In the other anecdote Bambi who had been living happily with two women Bots and Bambina comes under the
influence of a German anthropologist who had come to study the life style of the people. It was she who influenced Bambi into believing that it was immoral to live with two women without marriage and that he should marry one of them. This was incredible to him since he loved both the women and their children equally. Finally he decided whom to marry by tossing a coin and Bots won. To Bambina it did not make any difference so long as he supported her and her children. But Bambi lost his mental peace, began to drink and beat both the women up on every Saturday night. The women began suspecting one another. Each one felt that the other had put him under some spell and became another's enemy. Ironically enough, the night Bambi died a sudden death in Bambina's house there was a big fight over who had a better claim over Bambi's body. Bambina, in whose house he had died or Bots whom he had married. 'Formal' religion not only created problems where none had existed earlier but ruined the happiness of the three. (29)

Both the stories which form a part of children's conversation are narrated in a very lively West Indian dialect. They should be read in the original to have a full grasp of the 'destructive' aspect of religion.

1.6 The New Economic Set-Up

One more factor which changed the very fabric of African society during the colonial rule and which anchored the values of capitalistic society firmly was the 'new economic set up'. Since colonization itself was largely an
outcome of capitalistic demands of the 'mother countries' the colonies were the worst victims of the exploitative capitalistic pattern of economy. Frantz Fanon attributes the formation of class structure in Africa to colonization itself. (30) Even prior to the colonial rule Africa had been the indirect victim of the plantocracy in the Americas and the West Indies. With the development of slave trade the significance of Africa as a source of labour and as part of the great global commercial network grew tenfold. Long before the actual colonization, there had emerged a class of tradesmen in Africa which depended for its existence on Euro-African commerce and thrived on trading human bodies. As Bill Freund observes in his The Making of Contemporary Africa, 'The imperial conquest of Africa was undertaken to tap African resources in order to help resolve the economic problems of Europe'. (31)

After the political expropriation, direct colonial rule was introduced in many areas. With this started the extraction of the surplus in the form of labour or in the form of the product of the labour. The state acted largely as the tribute taker. In certain parts of Africa, particularly those with a long history of commodity trade the level of commodity production was highly advanced. In other parts the pre-colonial or rather pre-capitalistic social forms showing extraordinary flexibility as well as adaptability still survived. For sometime at least the result was the dual economy of 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

The colonial states began with labour problems; the
roads and railroads were built largely with forced labour. Added to these were the features of land taxation in cash and forced cultivation. In Achebe’s *Arrow of God* we get a glimpse of the problem of forced labour for road construction. In some cases this made the labourer work several miles away from home and he was denied family wage. With the introduction of compulsory taxation the phenomenon of migrant population began. Those who wanted to flee from taxes were therefore available as labourers in the city.

In Europe the capitalistic development of land had determined a process of growing privatisation of land rights with dominance of capitalistic social, economic and legal arrangements of land. In Africa a similar process was introduced and though Africans sometimes had an access to less or much less fertile tracts of land, the psychological shock of having lost their land to the landlord — usurper — was very great. Added to that was the problem of giving a large share of the crop to the landlord, which steadily reduced the squatter to utter poverty. In a moving account of his own childhood in an essay titled, ‘The Writer in a Changing Society’ Ngugi wa Thiong’o states:

> My father with his four wives had no land. They lived happily as tenants at will on somebody else’s land. Harvests were often poor. Sweetened tea with milk at any time of day was a luxury. We had one meal a day — late in the evening. (33)

A very important change in the economic set up under colonial rule was the increased role of cash economy. Very
soon after the colonial rule was introduced cash transactions became an integral part of the ceremonial rituals as well as of all the essential interactions that marked the community life. In Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* set in the eastern Nigeria of the 1890’s where colonial forces had not yet reached, there is no reference to cash transactions except in the form of cowry shells paid as a fine in the white man’s court towards the end of the novel. (34) In *Arrow of God*, (set about twenty-five years later) which depicts the transition in the socio-cultural and economic life under colonialism, the white man’s money, a guinea, has become a part of the offerings at ritual sacrifice. (35)

As has already been mentioned the land taxation and privatisation of land threw up large migrant population which was now moving to towns and cities to lead a marginal life in search of work. The conditions in the towns were stark and the workers had to depend on maintaining home contacts if possible. This led to a very close relationship between peasants and workers. Very soon a hierarchy of unskilled and skilled labourers and traders, bankers and middlemen was established with the labourers on the lowest rung of the ladder. According to Frantz Fanon, the development of more sophisticated economic techniques and the consequent creation of the skilled and unskilled cadres among the colonized natives resulted in a more subtle form of racial disparagement. He argued that the negro’s inferiority complex was mainly economic in its origin. (36)
With the colonial administration, a new class of bureaucrats together formed 'the black and the brown bourgeoisie' in colonial towns. They were completely divorced from and contemptuous of the rural population. They never contributed to the creation of national wealth but always gravitated towards intermediary activities as retailers, professional men, lawyers, civil servants, army officers, politicians, etc. Achebe presents this changed economic set up in No Longer at Ease through a very vivid depiction of the slums as well as posh areas and the introduction of several minor characters chosen from the cross-section of the metropolitan society. The penetration of the cash nexus in all corners of social life corroded its humanitarian aspect. The devastating consequences of 'the lure of cash' are depicted in Ayi Kwei Armah's The Fragments in a very telling manner. Baako's (the protagonist) sister has given birth to a baby. Traditionally the naming ceremony should take place on the eighth day. But Baako's mother and sister prepone it so as to bring it closer to the pay day in order to extract more expensive gifts from the relatives and friends. The baby's mother is busy making an appeal to the generosity of the people on the microphone. The baby meanwhile is smothered in the folds of an immense kente cloth and dies.

1.7 The New Administration and Judiciary

Coupled with the new economic set up was the new administrative set up which cut the fabric of African
society like a razor and contributed to the creation of the
colonial consciousness. What is true of Africa is true of
every other colony.

The colonial administration was set to the needs of
the material conditions of the African colonies as seen from
the metropolis. Immediately after the conquest the
administration was bound to have a strong military
character. Moreover the individual officers who were endowed
enormous discretionary powers were often eccentric by
nature. As time passed the system was bureaucratised with
more specialised services emanating from the capitals. Yet
in the countryside there were quite a few all purpose local
administrators with a lot of authority. Later on when the
British implemented the policy of indirect rule better known
as 'Lord Lugard' policy they appointed colonial chiefs in
the countryside. These chiefs were sometimes chosen from
among the members of the erstwhile royal families or the
village priests. At other times they were chosen from among
the interpreters, servants, etc. In the 1920's the British
did appoint some village heads as the 'colonial chiefs'.
They formed the basis for a powerful new class. Achebe
depicts in his Arrow of God how this new system operated as
a disruptive element causing the disintegration of the
village structure. (39)

The pre-colonial administration had been democratic in
its own way. Even where empires existed the administration
in the rural area had been totally under the control of the
village chiefs. But in the new set up the village chiefs did not have any real powers. They acted as tribute collecting agencies. This introduced corruption. The interpreters also had their own share in the system of corruption.

The administrative framework necessitated a number of bureaucrats who were to be ‘created’. A certain kind of educational pattern was introduced to achieve this end. (As the one mentioned in Lord Macaulay’s famous minutes in the case of India) Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease (40) and Ocol in the Song of Lawino (41) are classic examples of the elite class that came into existence after the new educational pattern was introduced.

The colonial judiciary also accelerated the process of colonization by introducing the British law which was not only alien but many times contrary to the traditional unwritten legal conventions. The land disputes and the domestic disputes which were settled more or less amicably by the ancestral spirits (egwugwu) or the local jury in the pre-colonial times were made more complicated because a totally alien legal code was applied to settle them. Many times common men and women were forced to accept this set up only because it had been imposed upon them by the master race. Even here corruption was possible because the language was a big problem and the interpreters took undue advantage of the situation and fed the judges and commissioners with distorted information. How this entire phenomenon must have started can be easily imagined on the basis of what happens
in the District Commissioner's office towards the end of Things Fall Apart. (40)

Through education, religion, the capitalistic pattern of economy and a different administrative framework, glorification of the puritanical Victorian ethos and the western values were achieved. This generated a feeling among the natives that their own culture was inferior and a far more superior culture, the culture of the master was now available to them. It became a model to be emulated. Certain values of the western culture had already been introduced to young children through education (which was in a way a double-edged weapon). Individualism, an important western value absorbed by the new elite class clashed with 'the sense of community' which was at the very core of African culture. This conflict is touched upon in Soyinka's A Dance of the Forest and dealt with elaborately in Achebe's No Longer at Ease and Ngugi's The River Between. Waiyaki the protagonist of The River Between is a man trapped between the conflicting demands of the traditional and individualistic ways of life.

The eagerness to adopt the external markers of Western civilization and the stupidity of confusing these with the civilization itself, became the most powerful alienating force as mirrored in the literatures of Africa and the West Indies. The entry into the intellectual elite class or the bourgeoisie became the dream of many, but this itself proved to be the most powerful alienating force, creating a sense
of exile among some of them. Lakunle, the school teacher in Soyinka’s The Lion and the Jewel is one such ‘mimic man’. He thinks that being civilized means wearing western-style clothes, using forks and knives for eating, waltzing and fox-trotting irrespective of your age and not paying ‘bride price’. (41) Okot p’Bitek’s Song of Lawino a poem originally written in Luo and translated into English, presents a satirical picture of Ocol, to whom Lawino a peasant girl is married. After receiving western education he abandons the rural world for urban artificiality, pretence and greed. His mistress Clementine, the symbol of his new world distorts her figure, straightens her hair, reddens her lips, bleaches her skin, pads her breasts and ruins her natural beauty in her futile pursuit of a western ideal of beauty. (42) But just as Lakunle’s village damsel rejects him Lawino also denounces Ocol and while asserting the primacy of her peasant values and cultural symbols she comments on every aspect of life in East Africa—dances, dresses, food, religion, education and politics. Her ridicule and scorn are aimed at the class basis of Ocol’s behaviour. These notions about presentability, respectability and all such social artificiality reach a pathetic level in Faseyi, a highly qualified doctor in Soyinka’s The Interpreters, who has married a sweet natured English girl. One evening after they have reached the house of an ambassador to attend a party Faseyi discovers that she has forgotten to put on her gloves. He feels so embarrassed and hurt that he finally
asks his (English) wife to stay a little behind him when they are to be presented. (43)

The acceptance of western culture under colonial pressures is the root cause of the state of alienation or anomie the colonized people suffer from. Their acceptance of that ethos does not automatically make them accepted members of that ethos. The colonizer rejects any possibility of assimilation as a part of the colonizer—colonized game. With the full realization of this some sensitive souls set off on a journey back home. But in terms of ethos 'the home' itself has gone on disintegrating or at least changing all through these years. New ways of homecoming would have to be sought and coming 'home' to one's own self as an individual and as a community would have to be made possible by redefining 'home' as well as 'homecoming'.

NOTES


Merle Oberon was an Anglo-Indian girl from Calcutta born of an Indian mother and a Scottish father. She found her way to Hollywood through several beds and rejected her Indian origin completely by making up a story—a pseudologia—about her Italian origin by inventing an Italian village as her birth place. During her successful years in Hollywood she used to introduce her Indian mother who lived with her as her ayah. Hers is clearly a story of wilful rejection of one's own identity in ethnic as well as cultural terms.


Sri Aurobindo's father Krishnadhan Ghose, a doctor trained in England was well known for his aggressively
anglicized ways. He named his third son 'Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose', the English middle name suggesting his father's wilful adoption of the western ways. He forbade his children to learn or speak Bengali; even at home they had to converse in English. At the age of five Aurobindo was sent to a totally westernized elite convent at Darjeeling with an English governess who served as a surrogate mother. When he was seven he was taken to England along with his two brothers and the three children were left there, in London, under the tutelage of an English couple the Rev and Mrs Drewett, who were given strict instructions not to allow the children to make an acquaintance with any Indian or undergo any Indian influence.

6 Ibid; p. 297.
8 E. Erikson, op cit; p. 299.
11 Ibid, p. 15.
12 A. Nandy, op cit, p. 5.
18 V.S. Naipaul, The Mimic Men, p. 83.
19 Ibid; p. 45.
20 Ibid; p. 98.


25 Ibid; p. 103.


29 George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin*, pp. 122-125, 133-139.


34 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 139.


