CHAPTER V

BETWEEN DIASPORA AND 'DARKNESS':
‘HOMELINESS’ FOR V.S. NAIPaul
Diasporic consciousness and exilic self, and the resultant sensibility that stands as the core genesis to cross-cultural or expatriate or diasporic discourse or writing is the perspective through which Naipaul's Janus-faced relationship and affiliation with India needs to be studied and analysed. Most prominently, diasporic consciousness is being perceived as the mental flights of a people, who are in continual pursuit of reconstructing their present from a past that is lost to them. Their roots shoot down only to strike against a frozen, fractured consciousness and then search for crevasses – to anchor on to, and the diasporic discourse is born. Stuart Hall, in his attempt to define diaspora and diasporic identity, claims that diaspora does not refer to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. Discussing and analysing the hybridities and heterogeneities in diasporic identities, which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference, Hall goes on to claim that it is because this ‘New World’ is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plentitude, recreating the endless desire to return to “lost origins”, to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning. And yet, this “return to the beginning” can neither be fulfilled nor requited, and hence is the beginning of the imaginary, or symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search and discovery. Sometimes this search and discovery, or rediscovery lands one in a terrain of anxiety, ecstasy and frustration as the very individual or author discovers the homeland different from what he had been dreaming of and what he had been told of the ‘purity’ of the homeland.

V.S. Naipaul has this ‘discovery’ as his recurrent theme in his writings. V.S. Naipaul’s writing career can be seen in terms of a journey, an ‘infinite rehearsal’ and meditation on his diasporic experience as an Indian West Indian and a continual revaluation of the situation of his double exile. In attempting over a long career, to write and revise his own location as twice-born ‘immigrant’, both within Trinidad as the descendant of an indentured Indian and again within Britain, he has constantly shown that the stories of colonialism and its post-imperial aftermath engendered what could be called ‘narratives of anxiety.’ Such narrative is a process that is delicately balanced, representing a search
for a cultural and psychic equilibrium which constantly approaches ‘self-destruction’ but contains within it the seeds of ‘self-discovery.’ Unlike those who dream of ‘imaginary homelands’ to adjust to the trauma of displacement, he has opted for homelessness. This homelessness offers Naipaul greater liberty and a broader framework in analysing the variant nuances of diasporic ‘essences.’

Discussing about the writings of Afro-Caribbean women in the US, Carole Boyce Davies claims: “Migration creates the desire for home, which in turn produces the rewriting of home. Homesickness or homelessness, the rejection of home or the longing for home become motivating factors in this rewriting. Home can only have meaning once one experiences a level of displacement from it” (Davies 1994: 113). In his analysis of ‘home’ and ‘identity,’ Madan Sarup (1994: 94-95) employs these expressions almost interchangeably, as he claims, just as in everyday life home connotes shelter and warmth, “it is also the story we tell of ourselves and which is also the story others tell of us.” To this idea of identity is linked the image of roots which succours the sense of one's identity. For a migrant writer, a voyage back to the country one's ancestor's came from holds the key to some answers about their own identity. A certain sense of both nostalgia and pain accompany a migrant's thought of home. V.S. Naipaul as a migrant as well as a creative writer treads on a very fertile cross road between an immediate homeland, his family history and the compulsions of migration as he draws the picture of his home country. By questioning the identity of India beyond geography and place, the point of view of the migrant writer helps to broaden the framework within which India is defined. Naipaul's world view strikes an ambivalent relationship with his experiences in India.

Another important aspect through which the diasporic communities gets defined and interpreted is the cultural dislocation, which can fall into what Spivak calls “the marginal specific or as the para institutional,” (Harasym 1990: 8) which in turn form an ethnic island of their own, of value only as archaic rarities of a distant land. Diasporic thought can have independent validity when the plurality of its cross-cultural perspectives can be used to provide constructive ideas of socio-political progress. Said in Culture and Imperialism enlarges upon the idea that the identity of a nation depends on new and
different kinds of visions, nations are also defined by their natives who live in exile
"whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure
between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages" (Said 1993).
Said's theory of "counterpoint" sees the intellectual exile as distilling the predicaments of
the displaced refugee. For many of these writers like Naipaul the picture of India as home
was framed only in hearsay. In 1964 Naipaul wrote "Jasmine" for The Times Literary
Supplement; here he laments that the English language is his best tool for expression, but
he is forced to feel an alien in English tradition:

Suddenly the tropical daylight was gone, and from the garden came the scent of a flower. I knew the flower
from my childhood; yet I had never found its name. I asked now.

"We call it jasmine."

Jasmine! So I had known it all those years! To me it had been a word in a book, a word to play with,
something removed from the dull vegetation I knew.

The old lady cut a sprig for me. I stuck it in the top buttonhole of my open shirt. I smelled it as I walked
back to the hotel. Jasmine, jasmine. But the word and the flower had been separate in my mind for too long.
They did not come together (Naipaul 1964a).

So, the quintessence of the diasporic migrant writers lies in drawing up a home from the
spaceless, redefining existence purely from an individualistic view, discovering a world
in one's own authentic space. Therefore, the dynamics of relocation stands central to the
discussion about the definition of the Indian nation in its plural form. Naipaul's
involvement with the Third World has categorised his writings as Indian or Caribbean.
Place forms an important backdrop to almost all his musings. And "place" for Naipaul is
not only a depiction of objective realities, but a subtle emotion which involves him and
moves him even to the pain of anger: "I like London. For all the reasons I have given it is
the best place to write in. The problem for me is that it is not a place I can write about.
Not as yet. Unless I am able to refresh myself by travel – to Trinidad, to India – I fear that
living here will eventually lead to my own sterility; and I may have to look for another
job" (Naipaul 1958).

As a man without a nation, choosing residence in a nation that is not his own, Naipaul
seemed to defy nationness as a valourising category. Naipaul's status as a 'twice or thrice removed' diasporic writer with 'nationlessness' as mark of liberty and a homeland in imagination provides him a unique position. His three books spanning three decades of his engagement with India provide an unprecedented opportunity to record the growth of an individual writer within the framework of his continuing encounters with his 'homeland.' Naipaul shares a very turbulent relationship with India, his homeland that dwindles in 'imaginary' and 'symbolic,' and this turbulent relationship finds expression in Naipaul's deep seated concern for the land of his ancestors; and his vision is being coloured by the very same diasporic consciousness that birthed his quest, he is caught within the ripples of his own making in his first real encounter with India.

Naipaul's works can be broadly divided into three phases and during the three phases of his works, which can be characterised, respectively, by mediation, alienation, and syncretism, exile shapes the relationship between Naipaul and his readers (Bakhtin and Medvedev 1985: 153). In the initial phase, which includes the works of his 1950s and 60s, the author mediates between the differing aspects of his identity, between Trinidad and England; these works, which look back to the colony, use irony and satire to bridge the different ideological and social evaluations of the author and his intended English readers. In the second phase, which comprises his writings of the 1960s and 70s and his books on India, he expresses alienation from English society, whose impersonality and decay he describes, and from colonial and postcolonial societies, whose problems he continues to analyse. These works often express disgust and repulsion. Then begins the third phase in Naipaul's writing career in which, he reconciles his New World and Old World and identifies and comprehends the world as a changing one of diverse realities and irrationalities. This period bridges the differences between the author and his English readers through a nostalgia and a sharing of humanistic values, as in The Enigma of Arrival; it bridges the difference between the author and his readers from developing countries through a sympathetic dialogue, as in India: A Million Mutinies Now. The titular metaphor of the mutiny on ship combines an old way of seeing the world with a new: that is, the author still sees a decay in the world about him, but this change, he points out in the course of the book, may be a necessary stage in Indians' coming to grips
with their postcolonial identity. In this third phase of Naipaul's works, two extreme attitudes towards the writer and writing, both of which have tended to isolate Naipaul from the people he writes about, are syncretised. The first conceives of the writer as "the last free man": "As prophet, as journal-keeper, as traveller and observer, deviser of tales or magician with words, [the writer] has always been felt to be above society..." (Quoted in Weiss 1992: 221). Conversely, the second conceives of the writer as an underground man of sorts.

With this framework and treasure in the background; Naipaul's status as 'twice or thrice born or removed' individual and writer with diasporic consciousness; his exilic self laying in mediation, alienation, and syncretism; a kind of cultural dislocation, or shock, or collision characterising his writings on Third World people and societies; and his celebration of 'nationlessness' as a mark of liberty of exhibition of sensibilities, the study attempts at examining and critiquing V.S. Naipaul's representation of India in his writings.

The three writings of Naipaul on India span the course of his career. Naipaul's first book on India, *An Area of Darkness* was the outcome of his first face-to-face encounter with India, which had so far been to him only an idea – an idea that he had inherited in Trinidad. Naipaul's first encounter with the harsh realities of India, its distress and pain affected and disturbed Naipaul more strappingly than its newly born independence. The dominant nationalistic spirit of that time pervading the Indian domain and India as a nation in building could not catch the attention of the creative self of V.S. Naipaul, instead the callous realities of a Third World postcolonial people trapped in impoverishment and misery, pain and squalor of futile mimicry and degeneration became the source of his very personal account of his experiences and disappointments. The kind of 'pure' India that his ancestors had made him dream of was lost forever in his first encounter with India and this marked the germination of the diasporic insecurities in him, which soon got transformed into an urge for escape and flight. This book marks the initial juncture in Naipaul's development of diasporic consciousness as a writer of the diaspora because for the first time Naipaul's imaginary "lost world" finds an encounter with the
realities of that “lost world,” which creates that ‘in-between,’ which forms the prominent strands of diasporic discourse.

*India: A Wounded Civilisation,* Naipaul’s second book on India, marks the subsequent phase in the development of his engagement with India. In this work Naipaul seems to have discovered the grounds and causes behind the pain and squalor and deficiencies of India, the areas that he had marked in *An Area of Darkness.* To Naipaul the major source that lies at the root of all maladies ailing India is the deep rupture created in people's idea of themselves by repeated invasions and conquests. The repeated invasions and conquests not only witnessed the plundering of the treasures of India but also the conventional knowledge, essences, ethos, values, norms and talents were systematically devastated and obliterated and the arrival of the British colonials smeared the final rupture in the sensibilities of the people. There was no notion of nationhood and national consciousness as India had so far only known a series of rulers in the past. By invoking and summoning the age-old Indian concept of *dharma,* Gandhi was successful in mobilising the people of India to an idea of unity and inculcated and activated a sense of national consciousness among the Indian masses. His successful attempts at transforming the Indian value system and infusion of new meanings and essences in the ideals of service and sacrifice brought about erosion in the caste, class and religious barriers among the people in the struggle for independence. Independence was won and emancipation came in, but the ideal was lost; self-governance did not reach the masses; the nameless millions, who had walked behind Gandhi, now returned to their individual worlds and engrossed themselves in their self-interests; and Gandhi was absorbed into Indian symbolism and Gandhianism became ritualised and lost its ideological content. In this work appearing in the guise of a prophet of doom, Naipaul has excited hostility by assuming the position of one who knows more about India than Indians do, and by forecasting an impending chaos in Indian civilisation.

*India: A Million Mutinies Now,* Naipaul’s third book on India, marks the third arena in Naipaul’s engagement with India. Naipaul, here, seems to be reborn into a new persona; accepting and tolerant, he listens to characters as they recount the narrative of their own
lives, and he refrains from offering overt authorial judgments. Naipaul's writings and views on India exhibit interplay of consistency and self-divergence; his preoccupations remain constant, while the response they produce is subject to change.

Naipaul's understanding and connection with the cultural heritage of India appends interest and significance to these works, although it is not clear whether it assists or impedes his comprehension of India. In India: A Wounded Civilisation, he defines the problems it poses: "India is for me a difficult country. It isn't my home and cannot be my home; and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it; I cannot travel only for the sights. I am at once too close and too far" (Naipaul 1977: 8-9). He bases his investigation of the society on the traces of India he carries within: "And though in India I am a stranger, the starting point of this inquiry – more than might appear in these pages – has been myself. Because in myself, like the split-second images of infancy which some of us carry, there survive, from the family rituals that lasted into my childhood, phantasmal memories of Old India which for me outline a whole vanished world" (Naipaul 1977: 9). The notion of this subjective, internal starting point contrasts with the emphasis placed on the value of objective examination of empirical data. It also corresponds to a tendency which Naipaul identifies and excoriates in Indians: "But to know India, most people look inward. They consult themselves: in their own past, in the nature of their caste or clan life, their family traditions, they find the idea of India which they know to be true, and according to which they act" (Naipaul 1977: 130).

It provides the impression that Naipaul's analysis of Indian attitudes and his arguments are projections of his own internal drama, and with an irony evident intermittently to Naipaul and his readers, are applicable to his own artistic practices: "And in India I was to see that so many of the things which the newer and now perhaps truer side of my nature kicked against – the smugness as it seemed to me, the imperviousness to criticism, the refusal to see, the double talk and double think – had an answer in that side of myself which I had thought buried and which India revived as a faint memory" (Naipaul 1964: 38). This can be seen to belong to an established tradition of representing the exotic, which treats other societies and landscapes as a backdrop for a playing out of the
traveller's own psychological conflicts, and for a definition and analysis of the self.

In *An Area of Darkness* Naipaul observes through an exploration of the autobiographical dimensions of his relation to India. In this work Naipaul traces the progress of his grandfather's migration from India to Trinidad where he recreated a simulacrum in miniature of his lost Indian world. The work goes on to describe the gradual contraction and disruption of the seemingly complete world of Trinidad's Little India. India functioned for Naipaul as a "resting place for the imagination." "It was the country from which my grandfather came, a country never physically described and therefore never real, a country out in the void beyond the dot of Trinidad" (Naipaul 1964: 29). India's unknown character is symbolised by a similar image to that which Naipaul uses in *A House for Mr. Biswas* to evoke abandonment and desolation, as if to suggest Naipaul's sense that, cut off from the land of his ancestors, he is, figuratively speaking, an orphan. India was imagined by him as shrouded in darkness, "as darkness surround a hut at evening, though for a little way around the hut there is still light" (Naipaul 1964: 32). In contrast to the notion that he can find India by looking within himself, and in an admission that his journey to India has been a disappointment, he asserts: "And even now, though time has widened, though space has contracted and I have travelled lucidly over that area which was to me the area of darkness, something of darkness remains, in those attitudes, those ways of thinking and seeing, which are no longer mine" (Naipaul 1964: 32). In this opposing motif, for Naipaul, India remains to an important degree elusive, mysterious and unknown. *An Area of Darkness* therefore forms a narrative of unfulfilled expectations and records Naipaul's failure to discover in India the ancestral homeland he had imagined it to be: "India had not worked its magic on me. It remained the land of my childhood, an area of darkness; like the Himalayan passes, it was closing up again, as fast as I withdrew from it, into a land of my myth" (Naipaul 1964: 266).

Naipaul shares the same condition and situation as that of the Indian repatriates from the West Indies who flocked to India, only to discover that they no longer 'belonged' to this place and, then besieged the ship, begging to be taken back to the West Indies, which they had accepted as their home unknowingly. He sees them as symbols of the
placelessness of the Trinidad Hindu community (Naipaul 1984: 61). Naipaul discovers that his conception of an Indian identity has no echo in the minds of those he meets, whose identity is defined in terms of region or caste. “A colonial, in the double sense of one who had grown up in a Crown colony and one who had been cut off from the metropolis, be it either England or India, I came to India expecting to find metropolitan attitudes. I had imagined that in some ways the largeness of the land would be reflected in the attitudes of the people. I have found, as I have said, the psychology of the cell and the hive. And I have been surprised by similarities. In India, as in tiny Trinidad, I have found the feeling that the metropolis is elsewhere, in Europe or America. Where I had expected largeness, rootedness and confidence, I have found all the colonial attitudes of self-distrust” (Naipaul 1972: 44).

Many of Naipaul’s bitterness of his account of Indian society can be ascribed to this disappointment. Rob Nixon (1992: 18, 67-68) argues that Naipaul moves between contradictory modes: at times he styles himself distanced and analytic; at other times, as subjectively entangled. Nixon locates the literary antecedents of his travel writing in the confident tones of Victorian travellers, the supposed impartiality of ethnography – which reduces the other to object – and the confessional mode which promises an honest declaration of the writer’s involvement. Naipaul writes that he bears traces of a vestigial Hinduism, attenuated to “that sense of the difference of people, which I have tried to explain, a vague sense of caste, and a horror of the unclean” (Naipaul 1964: 35). A sense of the difference between people works against the perception of kinship or solidarity. Such is his sense of alienation that Trinidad is atypically (for Naipaul) represented as a homeland, against which is measured his distance from India: “I had learnt my separateness from India, and was content to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors” (Naipaul 1964: 266). As a vestigial Hindu, he is able to enter into Hindu habits of thought. As an outsider, he possesses the necessary critical distance for judicious observation: he presents himself as better able to comprehend the state of Indian society than Indians themselves are.

An important aspect of Naipaul’s analysis of the Hindu character – the very effort to think
in such general terms might appear bound to slip into caricature – is his notion that Indians are incapable of perceiving in an objective way the world about them. He attaches a complex of assumptions to this proposition, arguing that Hindus lead instinctual lives governed by magic and ritual and by caste, lives characterised by self absorption and social indifference. Naipaul expounds and illustrates his contention with reference to Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Gandhi repeatedly detects in his experience the hand of God, who intervenes to rescue him from the commission of various sins. The book is shaped by an interplay of indeterminacy and structure which is the result of occasional divergences between Gandhi's will and the divine scheme. Naipaul finds the book deficient as an autobiography; it is lacking in observed detail of English and African life, he contends: "The inward concentration is fierce, the self absorption complete. ...The London of 1890, capital of the world – which must have been overwhelming to a young man from a small Indian town – has to be inferred from Gandhi's continuing internal disturbances, his embarrassments, his religious self-searching's, his attempts at dressing correctly and learning English manners, and above all, his difficulties and occasional satisfactions about food" (Naipaul 1977: 98).

This stands in direct contrast to the terms in which *An Area of Darkness* had chosen to commend Gandhi's capacity to look at India: he saw it, Naipaul argues, "as no Indian was able to; his vision was direct, and this directness was, and is revolutionary. He sees exactly what the visitor sees; he does not ignore the obvious" (Naipaul 1964: 77). Naipaul describes this capacity to Gandhi's residence in South Africa: "Contrast made for clarity, criticism and discrimination for self-analysis" (Naipaul 1964: 78). An implicit parallel is established between Gandhi's and Naipaul's position. From his reading of Gandhi's book in *India: A Wounded Civilisation*, Naipaul identifies a Hindu "need constantly to define and fortify the self in the midst of hostility" (Naipaul 1977: 100). As is the case with other aspects of his analysis of the Hindu psyche, Naipaul's comments can be read as contrasting with, and, at a deeper level, as corresponding to, his own position. Naipaul's comments and descriptions speak of a hysterical sense of embattled individuality, akin to what he defines as "the always desperate Hindu sense of the self, the sense of encircling external threat" (Naipaul 1977: 45). He writes that in India, for the
first time, he does not stand out from the crowd; his singularity is threatened. “It was like being denied part of my reality. Again and again I was caught. I was faceless. I might sink without a trace into that Indian crowd” (Naipaul 1964: 46).

The dehumanisation is intended to reflect the attitudes of a society in which the individual is supernumerary – as in the case of a woman sweeping the dam in Rajasthan with a rag, whom Naipaul perceives as denied humanity by the nullity of her labour: “She is hardly a person” (Naipaul 1977: 75). Naipaul’s other description of dehumanisation in Indian society is quite heartfelt: “I had seen Indian villages: the narrow, broken lanes with green slime in the gutters, the choked back to back mud houses, the jumble of filth and food and animals and people, the baby in the dust, swollen-belied, black with flies, but wearing its good luck amulet. I had seen the starved child defecating at the roadside while the mangy dog waited to eat the excrement. I had seen the physique of the people of Andhra, which had suggested the possibility of an evolution downwards, wasted body to wasted body, Nature mocking herself, incapable of remission. Compassion and pity did not answer; they were like refinements of hope. Fear was what I felt” (Naipaul 1964: 48). Such figures appear to constitute for Naipaul a threat to his own sense of self and of human possibility: “Men had been diminished and deformed; they begged and whined. Hysteria had been my reaction, and a brutality dictated by a new awareness of myself as a whole human being, and a determination, touched with fear, to remain what I was” (Naipaul 1964: 16). His reaction at this reduction of human possibility expresses itself in a manner whereby sympathy becomes virtually indistinguishable from revulsion: “It was compassion like mine, so strenuously maintained, that denied humanity to many” (Naipaul 1964: 263).

Whilst An Area of Darkness is concerned to reproduce the initial experience of the visitor to India, when India may be felt “only as an assault on the senses,” (Naipaul 1972: 41) India: A Wounded Civilisation expounds a general thesis about Indian society, but it would appear to be at variance with the values of balanced and rational assessment which Naipaul advocates in this work that it should contain descriptions in which observations seem to dissolve into nightmare and phantasmagoria. Naipaul's fear is openly avowed:
"The poverty of the Indian streets and the countryside was an affront and a threat, a scratching at my old neurosis. Two generations separated me from that kind of poverty; but I felt closer to it than most of the Indians I met" (Naipaul 1990: 8). An instinct for survival on his part leads to the fending off of any sense of kinship, and indirectly manifests itself in fascination, horror and rejection. Political movements which claim to represent the oppressed, Naipaul suggests, risk diminishing the objects of their concern by treating them purely as ciphers or passive victims: "There is more to people than their distress. ...And unless you understand that everyone has cause for self-esteem, you make a terrible political error. The Marxists tend to reduce people to their distress, or to their economic position" (Mukherjee and Boyers 1981).

Naipaul provides these generalisations about India with absolute authority, entailing the conviction that he possesses the measure of India, and that it can offer no surprises that would unsettle his formulations. Such confidence is implied by the audaciously encompassing scope of Naipaul's statements: "Insecurity merged with the Indian intellectual failure and became part of the Indian drabness" (Naipaul 1972: 85). With the help of a psychotherapist, Naipaul seeks to incorporate his observations in a thesis about the Indian character, which he defines as possessing a childlike perception of reality, and an underdeveloped ego, as prone to a purely instinctual life governed by ritual and magic, and as devoid of self-consciousness (Naipaul 1977: 102-3). Failures of understanding on Naipaul's part do not undermine his confidence in his capacity to generalise: "From whatever point they started...there always came a moment when Indians, administrator, journalist, poet, holy man, slipped away like eels into muddy abstraction. They abandoned intellect, observation, reason; and became "mysterious" (Naipaul 1972: 79).

The other dimension in which Naipaul's explanation of the Hindu character is perceived as an exercise in self-exploration, and his criticism of India as self-definition, concerns his description of "the Indian ability to retreat, the ability genuinely not to see what was obvious: with others a foundation of neurosis, but with Indians only part of a greater philosophy of despair, leading to passivity, detachment, acceptance. It is only now, as the impatience of the observer is dissipated in the processes of writing and self-inquiry, that I
see how much this philosophy had also been mine” (Naipaul 1964: 198). This may seem a surprising assertion, in view of his portrayal of himself as in a position to see what Indians cannot, as one who applies the “straight simple vision of the West,” (Naipaul 1964: 78) and in view of the absence of acceptance in his relation to India. Detach himself is what he does, both literally and metaphorically, by fleeing India, in the last chapter of An Area of Darkness, entitled “Flight.” He has asserted that “I long to find what is good and hopeful and really do hope that by the most brutal sort of analysis one is possibly opening up the situation to some sort of action: an action which is not based on self-deception” (Evans 1972: 51).

Sometimes it appears that by plummeting all forms of human activity to a perception of futility and vainness, Naipaul propounds a resigned sense of the hopelessness and despondency of any attempt at change. India: A Wounded Civilisation is prone to prognostications of impending doom: the conflict between archaic and modern currents in Indian life, Naipaul contends, has “cracked the civilisation open” (Naipaul 1977: 18). Citing from a R.K. Narayan novel, Naipaul infers that retreat is a repeated occurrence in Indian history: “Retreat from a world that is known to have broken down at last...a retrogression to an almost African night. ...It is the death of a civilisation, the final corruption of Hinduism” (Naipaul 1977: 43). In the perception of Naipaul Indian history gets reduced to a pattern of vulnerability, defeat and withdrawal: past failures cast their shadow over present and future efforts. Naipaul argues that India’s “crisis is not political or economic” (Naipaul 1977: 18), but is due to the inadequacies of its civilisation. Naipaul resolutely ascribes to India responsibility for its problems: “The faults lie within the civilisation itself” (Naipaul 1977: 148). His intention, presumably, is to refute those who see India's problems as arising from conquest: “I can’t bear the account of people who have been done to. Better to blame the civilisation that bred us” (Quoted in Haywood 2002: 122). The analysis implies the inevitability of defeat rather than proposing the means of producing an effective transformation.

India: A Million Mutinies Now, formed of the multiplicity of narratives, demonstrates the various dimensions of Indian reality and the many forms in which individuals seek self-
realisation: “All over India scores of particularities that had been frozen by foreign rule, or by poverty or lack of opportunity or abjectness had begun to flow again” (Naipaul 1990: 6). “People everywhere have ideas now of who they are and what they owe themselves” (Naipaul 1990: 517). Here, one of the interesting aspects is on Naipaul's dealings with the staff of the hotel where he is staying – specifically, on the dynamics of his relation with Aziz. This serves as a study in the shifting power relations of master and servant. “To possess a personal servant...is painlessly to surrender part of oneself. It creates dependence where none existed” (Naipaul 1964: 121). Ultimately, Aziz takes possession of Naipaul: the economic dependence of servant on master is mirrored by the emotional dependence of master on servant. The mode of the work at this point is that of the comedy of cross-cultural misunderstanding, with Naipaul cast in the role of outsider. He speculates, “Did I fully know Aziz?” (Naipaul 1964: 174). The question, which is central to his treatment of India in general, remains unresolved to the last: “I could not be sure that he had ever been mine” (Naipaul 1964: 192).

In contrast, the ideas expressed in India: A Wounded Civilisation, is constructed exclusively around Naipaul's proposition that there is a crisis in Indian civilisation: it contains no explicit information about his travels in India, and the detail serves to support his thesis, rather than a travel book, although Naipaul described it as a polemic rather than a travel book, although Naipaul described it as full of jokes and humour (Quoted in Haywood 2002: 129). At the conclusion of this work, Naipaul quotes from his article, “A Second Visit”: “The crisis of India is not political: this is only the view from Delhi. Dictatorship or rule by the army will change nothing. Nor is the crisis only economic. These are only aspects of the larger crisis, which is that of a decaying civilisation, where the only hope lies in further swift decay.” I wrote that in 1967; and that seemed to me a blacker time” (Naipaul 1977: 174).

In India: A Wounded Civilisation, much of the argument that Naipaul propounds is anticipated by “A Second Visit”: it touches on the subjects of magic, dependence, simplicity, borrowed ideas, self-absorption; an absence of intellect and of the idea of service. One can see Naipaul reaching for the formulation, “The poverty of the land is
reflected in the poverty of the mind,” (Naipaul 1977: 172) in the slightly looser equation, “And the physical drabness itself, answering the drabness of mind: that also held the Indian deficiency” (Naipaul 1972: 85). The argument about Gandhi’s autobiography in India: A Wounded Civilisation, on which Naipaul bases his contention regarding an Indian egotism that precludes a capacity to see the external world, was first expounded in 1965 (Quoted in Haywood 2002: 130), ten years before he began to write India: A Wounded Civilisation. This suggests that Naipaul’s argument was already formed before the visit on which the book was based. Further evidence is also found that his views on India were formulated long in advance of his visits to the country. In 1950, he wrote to his sister Kamla, then studying in India, about Beverley Nichol’s Verdict on India (1946): “He went to India in 1945, and saw a wretched country, full of pompous mediocrity, with no future. He saw the filth; refused to mention the “spiritualness” that impresses another kind of visitor. Of course the Indians did not like the book, but I think he was telling the truth” (Naipaul 2000: 5). This sketch closely corresponds to Naipaul’s response to India in his first two books. In another letter he asks Kamla to look for support for his contention that Indian culture is dead: “This is the picture I want you to look for – a dead country still running with the momentum of its heyday” (Naipaul 2000: 9). These statements give the impression that he travelled to India with a view to confirming his thesis about the society.

Naipaul seems to be claiming of applying methods of logical observation and rational analysis to the Indian scene, but the perceptible vindictiveness of some of his comments and remarks on manifold dimensions of India can suggest that he is writing out of a desire to wound Indian sensibilities, partly as a result of disappointment at India’s failure to correspond to his expectations. Furthermore, the notion that Naipaul wishes to encourage Indian self-scrutiny is in conflict with the stance he frequently adopts of one explaining Indian customs for a western audience. This raises the question of the nature of the audience he sets out to address. A more prolonged acquaintance with the country leads him to see it differently: “And where before I would have sensed only despair, now I feel that the despair lies more with the observer than the people. I have learned to see beyond the dirt and the recumbent figures on sting beds, and to look for the signs of
improvement and hope, however faint: the brick-topped road, covered though it might be with filth; the rice planted in rows and not scattered broadcast; the degree of ease with which the villager faces the official or the visitor. For such small things I have learned to look: over the months my eye has been adjusted” (Naipaul 1972: 42).

A sense that Naipaul wishes to wound might also be occasioned by the perception that his criticisms of India are in some measure contradictory. He presents India's modernity as purely superficial, and recommends the application of western methods of inquiry and assessment to the Indian situation. These form the basis of the contrast between Indian and western thought he wishes to establish: “When caste and family simplify relationships, and the sanctity of the laws cannot be doubted, when magic buttresses the laws, and the epics and legends satisfy the imagination, and astrologers know the future anyway, men cannot easily begin to observe and analyse. ...It is always there, this knowledge of the other, regulated world, undermining, or balancing, intellect and the beginnings of painful perception” (Naipaul 1977: 112). On the other hand, Naipaul indicts Indians of a confusion of values:

The mimicry changes, the inner world remains constant: this is the secret of survival. ...
Mimicry might be too harsh a word for what appears so comprehensive and profound. ...Schizophrenia might better explain the scientist who, before taking up his appointment, consults the astrologer for an auspicious day (Naipaul 1964: 60).

Indians are accused of a “craze for foreign” (Naipaul 1964: 90) - as symbolised by the tastes of Mrs. Mahindra, with whom Naipaul stays in Delhi as a paying guest – and of having insufficiently assimilated to foreign ideas. This paradox informs Naipaul's representation of various areas of Indian life: “Complex imported ideas, forced through the retort of Indian sensibility, often come out cleansed of content and harmless” (Naipaul 1977: 121).

When Naipaul first portrays the figure of Bunty the Calcutta boxwallah, in the article “Jamshed into Jimmy” (Naipaul 1963), it is in tones of mingled mockery and approval. He is seen as the representative of a cultural synthesis: “Enough has been said to show how admirable, in the Indian context, he is. ...East and West blend easily in him”
When Naipaul reworks the material in *An Area of Darkness*, the construction he places on it is rather more hostile; he finds not synthesis but mimicry:

It is with this gossip that one begins to doubt what Bunty and Andy show of themselves and one begins to feel that they are not what they seem, and that there are areas to which they can retreat and where they are hard to get at. ... Somewhere there has been a failure of communication, unrecognised because communication seems to have been established (Naipaul 1964: 65).

Critics have perceived Naipaul as being something of a *renoncant* - "an excellent French word that describes the native who renounces his own culture and strives towards the French" (Naipaul 1972: 45). Naipaul, too, has moved to the west, of which he writes at times in excessively reverential terms. He dismisses as mythical the notion that there was ever a time when India was complete and inviolate: "That Indian past! That fantasy of wholeness and purity, confusing the present" (Naipaul 1977: 143). Elsewhere, he has stated, "Culture is like language, ever developing. There is no right and wrong, no purity from which there is decline" (Naipaul 1972: 36). His invocation of the concept of mimicry, however, presupposes that an authentic, indigenous culture is being travestied, with cultural synthesis, as mentioned subsequently in this discussion, viewed as an affront and an act of violence: "I felt the coming together of England and India as a violation" (Naipaul 1964: 201). The comparative vantage point which Naipaul occupies is described in similar terms: "To look at themselves, to measure themselves against the new positive standards of the conqueror, Indians had to step out of themselves. It was an immense self-violation" (Naipaul 1964: 223).

The complex of ideas which Naipaul associates with mimicry of western ways - a parasitic dependence on western technology, a countervailing faith in magic, a thralldom to ritual, and a decay into barbarism - is one he has applied also to African, Islamic and South American countries. He asserts that only under British rule did India enter the course of history: "To read of events in India before the coming of the British is like reading of many pieces of unfinished business; it is to read of a condition of flux, of things partly done and then partly undone, matters more properly the subject of annals rather than narrative history, which works best when it deals with great things being built
up or pulled down” (Naipaul 1990: 144). This is in the spirit of his declaration in *The Middle Passage* that “history is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies” (Naipaul 1962: 29).

Michael Gorra (1997) contrasts the way in which Naipaul views cultural hybridity as an aspect of the loss and violation which is the legacy of empire, with the manner in which Rushdie's work celebrates the subversive potential of mimicry, the creative possibilities of heterogeneity, and the liberating aspects of inconsistency and contradiction. Rushdie's ebullient sense of the fluidity of identity encompasses his attitude towards his own cultural background. He suggests that cultural dislocation has compensations, and that there are gains to balance losses: “It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained” (Rushdie 1991: 17). Displacement produces a stereoscopic vision, combining the advantages of the insider and outsider. He furthermore contends that “it is perhaps one of the more pleasant freedoms of the literary migrant to be able to choose his parents” (Rushdie 1991: 20-21).

Naipaul has written disapprovingly of magic realism; he condemns a “fantastic and extravagant” way of writing about “degrading and corrupt countries” as evasive and as “empty, morally and intellectually. ...It makes writing an aspect of the corruption of the countries out of which it issues” (Quoted in Haywood 2002: 137). Rushdie argues that to redescribe the world is to remake it, and to challenge the politicians' version of it: “Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to remake the world in their own images” (Rushdie 1991: 14). Naipaul is notably forgiving of Mrs. Gandhi's faults; he sees her as a moderniser. *India: A Wounded Civilisation*, written at the time of the Emergency, has little to say on the subject. He declares that India's crisis is not political, that the Emergency merely formalises a state of social breakdown (Naipaul 1977: 45), and implies that foreign notions of the rule of law do not answer in the Indian situation.

Naipaul has in fact received harsh criticism for his unsentimental approaches and observations on India. Naipaul criticism, specially the criticism from India, plays a major
role in creating a broader understanding of Naipaul's vision. Naipaul, for Indians is an 'outsider' who cannot be given the right to an outsider's knowledge of the country. The thrust of the attack is not so much on what Naipaul observes but on why he chooses to observe only the 'poverty' of India. He is attacked for having a hidden agenda of lambasting India in his books to win acclaim in the West. The western scholars and critics complicate matters further by lauding Naipaul for his keen and accurate vision of the problems of India and for his unsentimental approach. But it should be kept in mind that Naipaul is to be understood in the context of his status as a colonial and postcolonial with a self-imposed exile self moving from places to places to trace his root and seek his identity.

V.S. Naipaul has written about others while writing about himself; though an art at least partly autobiographical, he has tapped experiences and constructed fictions that define aspects of the colonial and postcolonial world (King 1980: 129). The experience of exile has been the key to this link between self and others and this has enabled him to treat his own alienation and dislocations as an instance and analogue of the changes and search for identity of colonial and postcolonial people. Like societies in transition and development, the exile lives in an in-between that must be constructed syncretically into an identity (Quoted in Weiss 1992: 215). The exile finds his centre through this between, this sharing of both origins and ends; it is through dislocations that he locates who he has been and is becoming. In Estrangers a nous-memes, Julia Kristeva writes that a “secret wound” pushes the stranger into his wanderings (Quoted in Weiss 1992: 216). The circumstances of his family, Indian community and colonial society prepare the ground for the germination of Naipaul's exilic self. His exile, in one sense, is forecasted by a grandfather's voyage of exile from India to Trinidad. The author reflects on this inheritance in India: A Million Mutinies Now: “my ancestors had left as indentured servants for the sugar estates of Guyana and Trinidad. I had carried in my bones that idea of abjectness and defeat and shame” (Naipaul 1990). That Naipaul recognised the importance of those ancestral voyages to his identity shows in his fascination with and travels on the Asian subcontinent.
The close community life and enclaved status of Indians in the West Indies also prepares for the author's exile and his position or persona as an outsider; it has helped from his sense of difference and his attitudes towards ethnic groups and racial issues. The colony as a margin and a metahistory, a not quite "real" version of England, has prepared him for his exile. In the essay "Jasmine" Naipaul expresses his sense of divided reality deriving from a linguistic, cultural, and economic inheritance as a colonial. This division pushes him towards England; alienation in the metropolis and a division 'within' between traditional and Western culture lead to recurring voyages of exile to the far ends of former empires. Although the "wound" that pushes Naipaul into exile may have been a need to exorcise a "shame," through that dislocation he has located an identity. Exile has been full of pain, but it has also been a key to the treasure.

One of the prime subject matters of Naipaul's works is culture collisions and culture shocks; particularly the trauma of colonial and postcolonial people seen through the lens of an exile from the developing world. Various motifs such as change, the voyage, the divided self and social breakdown, the seduction yet illusion of a definitive return to one's origin get generated through the exilic self. The author is divided between fits of masked nostalgia and assertions of "trampling on the past," between an old identity in a traditional community and a new identity in a postindustrial society. This division translates into contradictory attitudes towards social change, viewed as progress on the one hand and decay on the other; as an exile caught in the cultural collisions of his epoch, Naipaul does not escape unscathed of their fragmenting effects. His sense of decay presupposes that there existed a better time from which the present has developed, and such a sense of decay or decline renders the present "empty and fragmented – since everything affirmative, ideal, obligatory, desired has been shifted, via the [historical] inversion, into the past...en route, [the past] has become weightier, more authentic and persuasive" (Bakhtin 1981: 147). Naipaul is of two minds: in works set in the Third World contexts, he rejects historical inversion, yet in works set in the First World contexts he laments the decay and fragmentation. For the exile, someone between two worlds, the appeals of motion and rest play themselves out in contradictory positions such as these. Exile shapes Naipaul's evaluations of traditional societies. He views them from
the perspective of one who has chosen to leave his traditionalist community for a fast-paced society in which the individual must actively construct his meaning and self-identity.

One finds that Naipaul's critique of the developing societies moves in two directions; it is an attack on ideologies advocating a return to the past and at the same time it is a commentary on the author's attitudes towards his own past and his sense of the future. For Naipaul, exile has been an ambiguous two-way journey; a break with the past, and yet a constant recollection of it in other places – Asia, Africa, North and South America. The exile, in leaving the past behind, like the boy-adult narrator of *Miguel Street*, must redefine it in order to move forward.

The sense of exile in Naipaul has formed his ideas and readings of other societies and his modes of encounter with their people; it has perhaps reinforced a tendency to observe strangers rather than interact with them, in part growing out of his enclaved and closely confined, Trinidad Indian community. Naipaul, in some of his writings about developing societies, has dealt in stereotyped categorisations and created a closed, egocentric persona, neurotic at times, at times paranoiac. But it would be reductive to judge Naipaul's travel books and social studies solely on the basis of how well the author's persona does or does not interact with those people he portrays. Naipaul has gained insights from his insider's-outsider's perspective, even though that insight can sometimes seem only an unilluminating attack on other's belief's and values, more of darkness, a gazing into the night sky (Harris 1983: 9).

The prominent ideas and dimension emerging out of the writings of Naipaul not only consistently exhibit communication (between the author and people of other cultures and societies), but also they powerfully record and project cultural shocks and collisions. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* does show a shift, however, in the mode of encounter between authorial self and others towards a dialogue in which the differences between that self and the people the author portrays are acknowledged but those differences do not prevent a sharing, a certain commonality (Yoshikawa 1987). This book seems to have
been composed from the words and voices of people rather than according to a readymade idea recursively expanded; through interviews and collaboration, the author enters into a relationship of difference yet equality with the people about whom he has written and does not judge them in a categorical way as he did, particularly in the books on India and the colonial Caribbean and West Indies.

Naipaul has perceived exile as both an outsideness and a state in-between variant cultures and worlds. For Naipaul, exile has been a paradoxical movement; Naipaul’s departure from and parting with Trinidad helps and makes him understand himself better as Trinidadian. Naipaul’s exodus and contravention of ties and attachments with his community marks the commencing of the long course of developing new links, though that does not extinguish the need to return and understand anew his Trinidad community. A sharing of opposites marks Naipaul’s exilic self, and his four writings from Finding the Centre through India: A Million Mutinies Now demonstrate a Naipaul both returning to familial and social aspects of his colonial past – to his father’s life, to African Americans and their struggles in the shadow of a heritage of enslavement, to the India of previous sojourns – and moving beyond that colonial past through revisions and rewriting of earlier journeys and ways of seeing. These writings of Naipaul exhibit a new pluralism in the exile’s vision, a sense of a million realities interacting in a rapidly changing world. It is a new pluralism in that the author, as Trinidadian Indian, has always appreciated the values of a cosmopolitan, multicultural, and multi-racial society.

Naipaul focuses, in some of his best writings, with lucidity and poignancy – about worlds changing, about colonial and postcolonial people confronted with change that at once destroys and, perhaps, will liberate and create. One particular passage towards the end of India: A Million Mutinies Now eloquently reflects his deep understanding of that domain, commemorating one generation of Indians and forecasting the exile of the next generation from an older world of certitudes. Contrasting the two, Naipaul writes of his acquaintances, Aziz and Nazir:

[Aziz] had never been out of Kashmir. At the moment the valley (and the mountains around it) was all the world he knows. He was still part of it. Twenty seven years after I had got to know him, Aziz had remained
more or less the same. It wouldn't be like that with Nazir. Already he had intimations of a world outside. Already, through the monthly exchange of letters with a foreign girl, there had come to him the idea of the possibility – always in Allah's hands – of a foreign marriage. In twenty seven years – hard for me now, in the late middle age, to imagine that stretch of time, that boundary in the shades – Nazir wouldn't be the same. New ways of seeing and feeling were going to come to him, and he wasn't going to be part of the valley in the way he was now (Naipaul 1990).

Born and brought up in the West Indian land mass (Trinidad) with an Indian inheritance, Naipaul's world is bounded by the menaces of colonialism. It is the colonialism that shapes the socio-cultural and political structure of the West Indies and it also grinds the attitude and outlook of the individual persons, this becomes clear in one of Naipaul's oft quoted images of man in colonial society: “A derelict man in a derelict land; a man discovering himself, with surprise and resignation, lost in a landscape which had never ceased to be unreal because of the scene of an enforced and always temporary residence; …from where there could never more be escape” (Naipaul 1962: 189-190). This emotion is the forerunner of one of the very early pictures of India that Naipaul remembers having: “India lay about us in things: in a string bed or two, grimy, tattered, no longer serving any function...in wooden printing blocks never used because printed cotton was abundant and cheap and because the secret of dyes had been forgotten” (Naipaul 1981: 29).

For the first and second generation Indians like Naipaul's grand father and father, their new homes in the New World never gave them that sense of fulfillment and completion as they were feeling themselves as transients waiting for their turn to ship back to their homeland. To quench their quest of homeland feeling an India was created in miniature. So, the physical objects of India that Naipaul and others as children were spoken of, were all symbols of a far away land, which existed in miniature within the walls of their houses in Trinidad. Here, the focus is unmistakably on a lost world represented at that time only in unflattering vignettes. It was a lost world which Naipaul recuperates with his writer's imagination and it is this process of discovery of the lost world, the very act of relocation that Naipaul goes through in his three writings of India. Just as his grandfather had “carried his village with him” (Naipaul 1981: 32), Naipaul's visits to India and his writings on India becomes another way of rewriting the nation for himself. Through his journeys to various corners of the country he will have to see exactly where and how his
world view strikes a relationship with his experience in India. Non-attachment, travel and discovery are the methods and strategies that Naipaul uses in his rewriting of the homeland that his grandfather or older generation Indians dreamt of returning. Attachment to India is triggered off on the one hand by scraps of ‘Indianness’ that formed part of his racial memory and on the other by encounters and observations that lead him to understand the place India will hold in his creative imagination.

Naipaul claims: “To me as a child the India that had produced so many of the persons and things around me was featureless, and I thought of the time when the transference was made as a period of darkness...something of darkness remains, in those attitudes, those ways of thinking and seeing, which are no longer mine” (Naipaul 1981: 30). Naipaul's early regret in *An Area of Darkness* is that he lacks the solid unchanging allegiance of his grandfather to a simple pure idea of India. Naipaul, here, shares much of the similar stance that had formed the structural principle of *A House for Mr. Biswas*. On the one hand, the idea of India was a strong reality within the house, whereas outside the difference from India asserted itself in the social interaction which Naipaul's and other Indian families had with those living in Trinidad. The picture of India and its decay were perceived and viewed as simultaneous with the obvious reality of a multi-racial existence. Indianness began to be defined by how it was unlike the “others.” The rigidity of this perception created a feeling of exclusiveness among the community which also laid it open to questioning.

The ‘minimisation’ of India that young Naipaul experienced and the cosmopolitan world which hedged in were the impetus to decide about his representation of Indian culture forms. So it is not sufficient to frame and bind Naipaul’s writings into the “quest for identity” formula alone. As Naipaul grew up, self-consciousness for being Indian and different, went hand in hand with an assessment of the image of India which he saw around him. This, coupled with memories of grand parents also held some foundational Brahmin prejudices. It was then a life of fractures, where violations were imagined all the time. But the biases were so deeply set that even their unreasonableness was not questioned as long as the close-knit rural Hindu family lived together in Trinidad. In
difference lay a vague kind of "threat" (Naipaul 1981: 31). This sense of difference remained as a definition of his own private world. Yet, the variety of culture in Trinidad brought out the impracticality of such an identity. It emphasised the rationalist mode and also preserved under-currents of centuries of unquestioned tradition. This was to be a source of many of the confusions that Naipaul faced in India.

Of course it can't be denied that Naipaul in Trinidad had never been a part in the celebration of the romance of Indian culture, but his mode has been that of questioning, and later, recognising his inherently hybrid culture. This has proved to be the impetus behind his detection of both human comedy and social inadequacy. Agreeing with Rob Nixon, Mustafa concedes: "Rather than aligning himself with new group formations, consequently Naipaul chooses instead to adopt the role of overseer of just such formations through the agency of the word. The idiosyncrasies that his persona gathers take on the weight of familiarity, granting his readers the illusion that their access to Naipaul's vision is through his sacrifice or exposure of the private in the interests of his public concern" (Mustafa 1995: 96). Although the building of an India from reminiscences, personal decisions and actual interaction with Indian people creates the concept of the country in Naipaul's mind, he brings to India the colonial experiences of Trinidad and London, a western vision with a distinct Indian ancestry. The mingling of the two visions has made his books on India both a record of a sense of belonging and an assertion of eternal homelessness.

The importance of a perspective that can see the many differences of India as part of its living day-to-day reality is missing from Naipaul's observations on India. Naipaul takes an interrogative stance, whether Indian or colonial. His concern is man rather than the making of laws for a subordinate race. As he says, almost throughout the book, "To know Indians was to take a delight in people as people; every encounter was an adventure. I did not want to sink; the mere thought was painful" (Naipaul 1981: 243).

Naipaul identifies himself with Gandhi's colonial blend of the East and the West and with the directness of vision that the west provides. Naipaul feels that native Indians cannot
see their country with the clarity of vision as Gandhi could, because they ignore the obvious. Here Naipaul's similarity with Gandhi ends. Gandhi's emphasis was upon the correction of a habit which he felt spoilt the atmosphere and was a source of disease. Naipaul's insistence is that defecation in public is the mark of a "static, decayed society" (Naipaul 1981: 73) for whom progress is retrogression into legend and symbol where the concept of social obligation has been defied. Gandhi is the revolutionary because his observations are exhortations for a possible change. Naipaul is the colonial, viewing India from a perch which looks for stereotypes among the natives and lists them with a triumph which is more concerned with categorising than with finding a solution for this malaise.

Naipaul's intellectualising of the evidence of British influence in India reveals his own inability to come to terms with the nation's postcolonial reality. He makes various contradictory comments because he cannot accept the fact that much of what appears as westernisation in India has been almost indigenised, or is exhibited as a curio and valued as such. Naipaul was on surer grounds when he spoke about Anglo-Indians like Bunty, but among the poor Kashmiri houseboat owners he is confused: "For here was English India. Here, offered for our inspection, were the chits...Here were invitations to the weddings of English army officers, now perhaps grandfathers. And the houseboat man, so negligible at the Tourist Centre, so negligible as he pedalled behind our tonga, pleading with tears that we should visit his boat, himself, altered: kicking off his shoes...his manners became as delicate as the china – so rare now in India – in which he offered us tea. Here were...tales of enormous English meals" (Naipaul 1981: 97). As Boyce Davies assesses – the frictions between the cultural demands of the parental homeland and the influences of a larger society inevitably result in "the construction of new identities," for, "Caught on the borders between two culture areas, and between exile and home, movement and fixity, ...Writing home means communicating with home. But it also means finding ways to express the conflicted meaning of home in the experience of the formally colonised. It also demands a continual rewriting of the boundaries of what constitutes home" (Davies 1994: 129).

Another aspect that holds significance to these writings of Naipaul is that through these
works Naipaul redefines his own experience of Hinduism. Naipaul nonchalantly brings to
the notice, how the Brahmin servant served food to everyone from a hand that was
already “dirty” (Naipaul 1981: 139) from rolling a crinkled cigarette. But the wholesome
observance of caste strictures did not bring attention of anybody to this. Incomprehension
gives way to reinterpretation, and Naipaul feels again and again that there is very little of
him which he can locate as Indian. Here Naipaul’s recognition of similarities with the
Hindu culture of his childhood does not serve to integrate him with the Brahmin family.
But his diminutive childhood world made no allowances for the racial and ethnic
diversity which cut across caste lines in India. Also, Naipaul cannot reconcile himself to
what he calls the Hindu respect for form at the cost of neglecting its physical
manifestations.

What challenges Naipaul’s perceptions the most is the Indian acceptance of the British.
Naipaul’s experiences in Trinidad had lent themselves to the formation of multiple
possibilities of the definition of India. But through his analysis of British India and its
remnants in India, Naipaul sees not the victory of India’s independence, but the
humiliation of a people who doggedly follow British customs and keep Kipling’s India
alive. In an interesting parallel between the Englishness of Trinidad and that of India,
Naipaul talks about colonial representations which do not ring true. So Naipaul feels,
what has now become an integral part of India is the “chivalry” of England “tempered by
legalism – which in Indian minds can be dissociated from the fact of English rule, the
vulgarities of racial arrogance” (Naipaul 1981: 201). Naipaul calls a section of his
travelogue “Fantasy and Ruin.” Here he distinguishes between the artificiality of British
India, and the squalor of India where ruins of numerous conquerors from the Aryans to
the Muslims gave India a distasteful vision of past and present Indianness. But here
Naipaul forgets or ignores the fact that this is a very different and destructive history,
where creativity of the people was restrained. In this context it is to be remembered that
the indispensable treasure of wealth and the political amorphousness of India dragged the
attention of many conquerors, who conquers after conquests, plundered and drained the
rich treasures of the country, crippling her and making the idea of nation building
unthinkable; hence, it is impractical for Naipaul or anybody to anticipate an ideal or
perfect India rising from ruins.

An inevitable insider-outsider conflict colours Naipaul's perceptions about India. He moans the way that the Indians had to see themselves through European eyes to be aware of their own spirituality, so that "in the acquiring of an identity in their own land they became displaced" (Naipaul 1981: 212). With a fractured vision familiar in postcolonial discourse Naipaul blames Indian acceptance of suppression as a case not of mimicry but of schizophrenia. His concerns and rage do not show him the crippling vastness of the nation, the perennial sapping of its wealth and its fledging independent days. In his colonial zeal arguments about Indian nationalism appear only as a feeble ripple. He himself is wooed by the foreign press reports on India, and gives one what by now is a standard western interpretation of the Indian nation. Writing his first book on India in the early sixties, it was difficult for Naipaul to dissociate himself from the idea that Fantasy had also become part of the Indian Ruin. Naipaul's nationalist desire to preserve the "wholeness" of India in his imagination, had somehow subtracted a pure idyllic subcontinent from the burden of past misfortunes which have fatefuly become part of its identity. The Taj Mahal may "speak only of personal plunder and a country with an infinite capacity to be plundered" (Naipaul 1981: 205) but it cannot be seen apart from the cycle rickshaw man's "straining limbs" (Naipaul 1981: 206) that take tourists to see it. Naipaul's pain at seeing the wounds of India cause the same dismay and anger which is an integral part of the migrant's perspective for it contains both the nationalist's desire and the colonialist's yearning and zeal. It is a zeal to see "home" as heaven, pure and unblemished - a true fantasy (Rai 1982: 26).

The other perspective to read Naipaul's India writing is to locate a migrant's zeal to show the hollowness of Indian adulation of the conqueror's legacy and seeking his own self-reflection through them. Much more oppressive than the powers of foreign imperialism is for Naipaul the insistence to remain uninvolved. Naipaul comments on India's obstinate "sense of continuity" (Naipaul 1981: 217), by which he means the absolute lack of vision which has resulted in loss of creativity and dynamism. The ability to endure, which Indian labels as her "strength" (Naipaul 1981: 217) has eroded her ability to progress. In
an urge of protective national gesture Naipaul becomes the "insider" once again when he cannot endure the Sikh's disparaging comments on Indians as "monkeys" (Naipaul 1981: 230) or "bloody Dravidians" (Naipaul 1981: 231). In a rather sentimental outburst he says, "I tried to transmit compensating love to every starved man...I wished to extend myself, to see the limits of human degradation, "to take it all in at that moment" (Naipaul 1981: 230). It is for him ultimately "a private failure" (Naipaul 1981: 231). In utter moral confusion Naipaul asks: "What then was the India that was left, for which one felt such concern? Was it no more than a word, an idea (Naipaul 1981: 245)?" Naipaul's attempt at understanding the Indian nation in its entirety will depend in An Area of Darkness on understanding its chaotic, confused fronts, offering myriad interpretations. An endless past faced with the prospect of a bottomless future afflict the present existence of the country for him.

The West Indian and Indian displacement on the cultural basis implies Naipaul's intellectual rejection of Indian ways and morals. But the eradication of their persistence in the subconscious reflexes of personality by his western ways of thought is impossible. Consequently, there is a conflict on the one hand, to an ironic stance towards Indian manners and morals, while on the other hand, it takes Naipaul to the brink of terrifying self-perception as an 'unaccommodated West Indian.' The oppressive fears and darkening despairs described by Naipaul in An Area of Darkness would not seem strange. In his A House for Mr. Biswas – the saga of Indian life in the Caribbean had already traced analogous moods and attitudes. The career of Mr. Biswas in roughing out the obstinate substance of life in the West Indies is a testimony to an inheritance, lost but not overcome. Naipaul writes in The Middle Passage: "Living by themselves in villages, the Indians were able to have a complex community life. It was world eaten up with jealousies and family feuds and village feuds but it has a world of its own, a community within the colonial society, without responsibility, with authority doubly and trebly removed" (Naipaul 1962).

Naipaul's Indian Hindu Brahmin self, at times confused by his British self with English reserve and uninvolvement and also his West Indian origin by birth, makes Naipaul twice
removed from his ancestor's motherland, India. Leaving West Indies, his place of birth Naipaul got settled in England in pursuit of success of his writing career with a view that nothing worth happens in a colonial land like the West Indies, but in England he is not fully integrated to Englishness. He has an obsession of being English but in India he cannot be accepted as distinguished Englishman because of his resembling features of ‘Indianness.’ He becomes rootless and homeless always remaining in quest for identity. His is a sensibility of an expatriate; he is an expatriate in England having preferred self-exile from Trinidad; and once again he is expatriated in India, the country of his ancestor's origin. He becomes double expatriate or twice expatriated. He lies in a condition worst than his father, who hid himself in the latrine refusing to be repatriated when the ship was ready to leave for India. His father preferred to be in the country where he accepted expatriation. Seepersad Naipaul did not move round the countries in search of identity like Vidiadhar Naipaul.

In quest of his identity and exploration of his roots, V.S. Naipaul as a constant traveller always remains in search of his own identity, and journeying to India he comes to terms with his own homelessness. “I had learned my separateness from India” he observes in An Area of Darkness and was content to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors.” Detachment is the only response adopted by Naipaul. Rootlessness may be inevitable for Naipaul but his best accounts are of places most firmly attached to his roots: Trinidad, the land of his birth, and India, the land of his ancestors. Then rootlessness is the base of V.S. Naipaul's identity but it is also his subject matter. Naipaul confesses: “To be an Indian in England was distinctive, in Egypt it was more so. Now in Bombay I entered a shop or a restaurant and awaited a special response. And there was nothing. It was like being denied part of my reality. Again and again I was caught. I was faceless. I might sink without a trace into that Indian crowd. I had been made by Trinidad and England; recognition of my difference was necessary to me. I felt the need to impose myself and didn't know how” (Naipaul 1990).

Without any doubt, V.S. Naipaul’s writings on India stems from his individualistic perception of India, which has been structured through his variant experiences in
Trinidad, his interaction with the Indian communities in the West Indies, encounter with the ‘other’ in the West Indies, the cultural inheritance in his grandmother's house, and his anxieties and fears for his own identity and self-hood. One of the most prominent strands that were quite formidable in shaping and influencing Naipaul’s idea and vision of India was the Hindu India of the West Indies in which he was born and brought up; his grandmother's house provided the first link with his Hindu self and with the India of his ancestors. Although Naipaul did not understand much about the Hindu religious strictures and rituals of his grandmother's house, yet there was always something sacred and purity in the very idea of India. He was next introduced to the Hindu India of his father's stories, which epitomised for him the unity of the old world. And Naipaul from his grandfather as well as from other Indians in the West Indies used to hear fairy tales of India as a golden and enchanted land, full of prosperity and purity. So, as a child Naipaul grew up with a highly eulogised idea of India. As gradually Naipaul grew up in the social stratification of the West Indies, he came in encounter with the 'other' segments of the West Indian society and he felt and considered the 'other' as people of no worth and the land came to be perceived as a waste land where nothing worth and meaningful happens. So, here what is to be marked is Naipaul’s observance of a chasm between the two worlds; one was the colonial world of Trinidad, his place of birth or the land of adoption, which he was trying to flee away and the other was the Indian Hindu world, the land of his ancestry, which was the land of his dream, as he says in one of his writings, he had never felt rooted in Trinidad, he had grown up to believe that his roots lay in far off India – the sacred land that his grandfather came from. But a true return to this land was not possible for Naipaul.

As Naipaul grew up and was in quest of opportunities in shaping his writing career and making himself known in the world, the metropolis England attracted Naipaul’s imagination and here he thought that he could produce something worth. Though England became his residence and English his attitude, yet he could not be able to fully integrate himself to ‘Englishness.’ But landing in the metropolis, Naipaul began to perceive the West Indies (Trinidad), his place of birth and the Whole Third World as the domain of people trapped in impoverishment and colonial mimicry. Here three aspects
need to be marked; Naipaul as a diasporic migrant with an exilic self (of leaving the country), having a residence in the metropolis (England) with English attitude, if not Englishness and India laying in his dream as a sacred land. So with this background when Naipaul lands in India and encounters the 'realities' of India, what gets yielded is frustration and hopelessness, that Naipaul attempts at releasing through his book, *An Area of Darkness*.

Another aspect that needs to be analysed is that unlike other postcolonial critics who find the roots of devastation in the Third World countries in the seeds of colonialism, Naipaul marks the Third World countries' inability to come over the devastations of colonialism and he criticises the Third World for mimicking the colonials. However, it is to be understood that through the pathos of the Third World people Naipaul sees a ray of hope emerging. Though in his first book on India, *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul gapes open the bare nakedness of India, in his second book, *India: A Wounded Civilisation*, he finds that India has been subject to devastations through many conquests from the Aryans to the British colonials, but he wishes and hopes India to rise from the ruins of devastations. In *India: A Million Mutinies Now* he makes an attempt to establish the long lost connection with India; he is now an insider because the dirt or distress that he sees does not throw him into a spasm of revulsion and he can stand and look beyond what strikes the eye. The whole unconscious working of the diasporic consciousness is laid out in Naipaul's works and comments on India. In *India: A Million Mutinies Now* he writes that his own lack of understanding generated his reactions: "What I hadn't understood in 1962, or had taken too much for granted, was the extent to which the country had been remade; and even the extent to which India had been resorted to itself. ..." (Naipaul 1990: 517). Ten years later on a visit to India, he made the following comment on the intellectual growth of India: "There is a kind of intellectual life now that didn't exist in the 1960's. India is on the verge of immense intellectual development, I think in every field" (Bhatia 2000).

Naipaul's status as a diasporic writer and the problematic fissure it created in his Indian sensibility has recorded for posterity the deep psychological violence caused by colonial
rule and its legacies of confusion, alienation and psychological exile which the world has to continue to live with. Naipaul’s initial bitterness generated a unique sense of detachment, which in addition to being essential to any original quest has yielded transparency to his struggle to establish a connection with India. Though Naipaul has been criticised for his bitter resentment and presentation of India, yet it is to be understood that as a diasporic writer Naipaul lands in India as a quest of his root and what he discovers in India, his and his ancestor’s dreamland is mere frustration. But Naipaul should not be misunderstood. Naipaul makes a well-ordered search for the roots of the maladies that ail India. The other aspect is that Naipaul always wishes to be in a state of homelessness that provides him more opportunities and amenities for ‘exploration.’ This is in fact a predicament of a diasporic writer. So, Naipaul’s writings on India are not only the outcome of his quest for India but are also a unique record of the making of a diasporic writer, of his development, of his anguish, rage, search, and finally of his successful mental restoration of India from a pattern of painful fragmentation to wholeness.