

CHAPTER V

HIREACHY AND POWER IN THE HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION

5.1 Overview

A discourse, coming from renowned literate especially from a non-fictional writer, demands an extra, disinterested and intellectual explication. Since the facts, which are preserved in such non - fictional works, cannot be easily evaded as they stand for reality and cannot be considered as the writer's imaginative venture. Although Naipaul's work, fictional and otherwise, is a serious, some might say almost compulsive engagement with "history", extracting any coherent view of history out of his corpus is fraught with difficulty. His argument depends so much upon the force of his words, and the dramatic contexts from which they emerge, that to re-describe them is always to risk caricature.

Nevertheless in his colossal world with infinite discrepancy in its physical, geographical, cultural, linguistic and even in the intellectual matrix one final judgment is fragile to appease the general mass. As it is, there are as many schools of thought as there are different cultures. So as a civilization, a culture or a country, which attracts one, might concomitantly distract others. One may under the aura of its effect, exaggerate the beauty and goodness of a particular civilization, but another may disparage it.

A civilization consists not only men and women, but also their beliefs, customs, assumptions, living style, manners and achievements in literature, science, art, polity, economic development and so on. All these ingredients of culture and civilization are manipulated around the infancy and boyhood of that civilization. With the passage of time, change is likely to come. In the Indian context, changes have come but these new changes are unable to entirely suppress the old. Consequently the old and the new vistas, the old and the new traditions and fashions enjoy a parallel movement. Psychology tells

us that the impressions, which are erected on the psyche of a child are difficult to be deleted at an advanced stage. Similarly the beliefs and assumptions even practices, which have been coming down to us since time immemorial are too hard and fast to be broken. They are now engraved deep in our blood, in our spirit and in our 'collective consciousness and unconsciousness.

Now what might be utilitarian and significant in the past may lose its utility and potential in the present. So a reshuffle and modification of laws, both oral and written, are supposed to appear intermittently. These modifications, now individual and then collective, cannot annihilate the older ones completely. It happens with all civilizations and so with India. In India, it is more conspicuous.

Since the Indian civilization is one of the oldest, there are many more paradoxes and contradictory ideologies in its civilization. Although there is a professed unity in all its diversity, but the reality is indeed different from the professed and apparent one. Naipaul has dexterously brought out these inexplicable and unreasonable disputes on Indian civilization and history. For Naipaul, whose great achievement was to bring to light, in the words of the Nobel citation, "suppressed histories", forgotten historical complexes, which sediment into our psyche and distort us. If there is one such complex that Naipaul seems to consistently dislike, it is historical amnesia. He is only an outsider, and can see only the external and physical facets and cannot grasp the inner and deeper integration. Somehow these inner discrepancies are stronger. At times his judgment is partly correct, but at time it is incomplete, vague and indecipherable. It is so because his knowledge of India is incomplete and his Indianans is unique. His constant and recurrent visits to India have acquainted him only with the physical part of India and he remains unacquainted with the inner richness of India. All that Naipaul attempts to do is to find a reasonable link or relevant meaning between the primary assumptions behind any social custom and its modernized, modified or at sometimes its distorted social manifestations. The actual and relevant purposes and intentions, (which were conceived long ago by the sages and seers) of different rituals, ceremonies and practices have desisted long ago. It is Naipaul's

limitation that he does not stop to explore how and why every ritual and ceremony has undergone a gradual change, not only in its social manifestations but also in its assumed purpose and intention. We can observe here his comments and judgment on some of the oldest and most practiced samskaras.

For instance let us probe into one short paragraph from his first book on India, *An Area of Darkness*:

“I had no belief; I disliked religious rituals; and I had the sense of the ridiculous. I refused to go through the janaywa, or thread ceremony of the newborn with some of my cousins. The ceremony ends with the initiate, his head shaved, his thread new and obvious, taking up his staff and bundle - as he might have done in an Indian village two thousand years ago and announcing his intention of going to Kasi - Banaras to study. His mother weeps and begs him not to go; the initiate insists that he must; the senior member of the family is summoned to plead with the initiate, who at length yields and lays down his staff and bundle. It was a pleasing piece of theatre. But I knew that we were in Trinidad, an island separated by only ten miles from the South American coast and that the appearance in port of Spain street of my cousin, perhaps of no great academic attainment in the grab of a Hindu mendicant scholar bound for Banaras would have attracted unwelcome attention. So I refused: Though now this ancient drama absurdly surviving in a Trinidad yard, seems to me touching and attractive.”¹

Naipaul asserts that he had a sense of the ridiculous for this thread ceremony. As he has described this ceremony, it is likely to produce this sense of the ridiculous. Each ritual of this thread ceremony is real and meaningful. The thread ceremony symbolizes the second birth of the child. The second birth is supposed to end the impure life that had gone before. The removing of hair symbolizes the removal of guilt and impurity. The

concerned boy takes the pledge of *Brahmacharya* and goes for education to a *gurukul* where he lives the life of a mendicant. This was what happened in the past. But with the passage of time, human life changed, consequently his needs changed. Now the kind of education given to him in the archaic *gurukuls* could no more aid him and make him survive in the modern world. Although much of the syntactic structure of this thread ceremony is in existence and much of the semantic value is extinct now, this ceremony has managed to persist. 'Old habits die hard', says Salman Rushdie in his legendary *Midnight's Children* and thread ceremony is still much more than a habit. It is part and parcel of Indian culture and life. Indians hardly let any of their beliefs and customs die. Indifferent to the distorted form and meaning of this thread ceremony, they show their complete faith in every religious ritual. Instead of appreciating this faith, Naipaul has restricted himself only to watch over all this as a part of 'theatre' that is 'touching and attractive'. Naipaul seems to carry with him all the layers of history he can decipher: his Indian roots, his Trinidadian inflections, his anglophilia, and even his cosmopolitanism. It is writing of loss and of anger, of unsettling confrontations, and confident certainties. It seems that Naipaul has, on the one hand, a keen eye for the displaced and the unrealized that opens him up to other worlds; on the other hand, one notices that openness is belied by his sense of futility about most people he writes about.

5.2 A SURGEON LIKE OBJECTIVE DISSECTION OF CIVILIZATION

Naipaul does wish to hold on to the racial identity that he had preserved in Trinidad, but it did not have any importance in the Indian context as he felt that Indians did not consider themselves as a single race as they felt the country was divided into smaller kingdoms. The 'negative identity' assigned by the writer to India throughout his travel narratives leads to the conclusion that his expected readers are not Indians, but Westerners. He comments in *India: A Wounded Civilization* thus: "So India even absorbs the new into its old self, using new tools in old ways, purging itself of unnecessary mind, maintaining its equilibrium. The poverty of the land is reflected in the poverty of the mind: it would be calamitous if it were otherwise." This comment that Naipaul made

brands Indians as intellectually poor. This brings in a negative identity for the people even though critics like Bruce King agrees with Naipaul's observation and remarks in *Modern Novelists: V. S. Naipaul* thus: "The world has always consisted of change: it is necessary for people and cultures to adapt. This must; however be done creatively, making use of local resources, and with planning and hard work rather than by mimicry of the formal colonial powers." From this comment it could be inferred that cultural development does not occur through unconscious mimicry of the 'other', but it is a conscious and gradual process of 'self' development. 'Culture' is one of the major themes that Naipaul focused through his Indian narratives. He comments in *India: A Wounded Civilization*: "No civilization was so little equipped to cope with the outside world: no country was so easily raided and plundered, and learned so little from its disasters." Naipaul's vision of India is neither that of a native Indian nor that of a Trinidadian visiting a new/ foreign place. He is a part of India and also was separate from the country. Hence his vision of India is peculiar.

Cultural changes occurred in India, but always was a source of imitation of the West as Naipaul narrates in *India: A Wounded Civilization*:

"India continues imitative and insecure, as a glance at the advertisements and illustrations of any Indian magazine will show. India, without its own living traditions, has lost the ability to incorporate and adapt: what it borrows it seeks to swallow whole. For all its appearance of cultural continuity, for all the liveliness of its arts of dance, music and cinema, India is incomplete: a whole creative side has died."²

As evidenced from this comment, cultural homogeneity is not required while taking into account individual likes and dislikes. This comment also emphasizes that culture need not stand as a homogeneous/monolithic idea. It has extended horizons and is flexible as far as human ideas can undergo change. Manjit Inder Singh, comments in *V. S. Naipaul*, on the need for redefining cultural homogeneity: "The very concepts of homogeneous national

cultures, the accepted or contiguous transmissions of historical traditions, or ‘organic’ ethnic communities, are in a profound process of redefinition. The earlier, over riding idea of pure, national identity can only be achieved through the negation of the complex inter weavings of history.”³ This comment highlights that national culture cannot be made fit within a frame work according to the individual’s ideas.

The need for Indian culture to exist as homogeneous without seeking contribution from external sources does not pave the way to any development of the civilization. The new identity created for Indian’s by Naipaul, mimicking or imbibing western values, need not be reworked. He is against the idea of using Western yardsticks for studying Indian civilization as observed from *India: A Wounded Civilization*:

“European methods of historical inquiry, arising out of one kind of civilization, with its own developing ideas of the human condition cannot be applied to Indian civilization: the European approach elucidates little, has the effect of an unsuccessful attempt to equate India with Europe, and make nonsense of the stops and starts of Indian civilization, the brief flowerings, the long periods of sterility, men forever claimed by the instinctive life, continuity turning to barbarism.”⁴

Cultural chaos was the major backdrop that Naipaul used, to portray the decay of Indian civilization. It could be considered as a carefully constructed platform on which he could lay his narrative firmly. India is presented by the writer as a ‘strange’ land without cultural homogeneity to fit to the backdrop of his narration. Naipaul comments about the feeling that he had about India in *India: A Wounded Civilization*:

“India, which I visited for the first time in 1962, turned out to be a strange land. A hundred years had been enough to wash me clean of my Indian religious attitudes, and without these attitudes the distress of India was-and is-almost insupportable. It has taken me much time to come to terms with the strangeness of India, to define what separates me from the country: and

to understand how far the ‘Indian attitudes of someone like myself, a member of a small and remote community in the new world, have diverged from the attitudes of people to whom India is still whole.’”⁵

Pratap Bhanu Mehta focuses on the purely objective vision that Naipaul had in his travel narrative. Naipaul does not see any significance in the past glory of India. Naipaul’s unawareness of the real glory of India could be seen in *India: A Wounded Civilization* from the comment: “There are University students in Bangalore, two hundred miles away, who haven’t even heard of it. It isn’t only because it was so completely wiped out, but also because it contributed so little: it was itself a reassertion of the past.” The ‘ravaged monuments’ are presented by the writer as a ‘reassertion’ of the past that contributed ‘so little’ to the progress of Indian civilization. These comments were made by Naipaul due to the total neglect of the cultural history of India. Even though he campaigns through his travel narrative against the unawareness of the past glory of India by the indigenous people, he himself appears to neglect the past grandeur that India had. This negligence does construct a new identity for India. Indian identity itself can be seen as questioned by Naipaul in his narrative *India: A Million Mutinies Now*:

“The idea of an Indian community-in effect, a continental idea of our Indian identity-made sense only when the community was very small, a minority, and isolated. In the torrent of India, with its hundreds of millions, where the threat was of chaos and the void, that continental idea was no comfort at all. People needed to hold on to smaller ideas of who and what they were: they found stability in the smaller groupings of region, clan, caste, family.”⁶

The Indian identity as seen from this comment was not that of knowing each other, but the people’s identity according to Naipaul, was that of being a social group divided based on caste, region and family. This is one of the major reasons for India’s cultural decay. Even though he tries to see India from the view point of an Indian, he could not place himself in the position of being an Indian. Manjit Inder Singh’s comments, in V. S.

Naipaul, on the vision of India in Naipaul's narrative: "This cyclic pattern of unbelonging to the Caribbean, India or the West has been voiced as the undoing of Naipaul as a writer by many fellow West Indian writers who see Naipaul's inability to nourish a positive response as a sign of his inner falsity and deliberated evasion of sordid reality."⁷ This comment throws light on the psyche of the writer while narrating India. His Trinidadian life style made him disagree with the Indian communal identity.

A note worthy point at this juncture is that for all the disillusionment that Naipaul had presented in his travel narratives, India stands as a platform that the writer had already set. This is a narrative strategy employed by the writer to present social and cultural decay of India through his travel narratives. The visions of Naipaul can be seen as purely Westernized and unsentimental towards the people whom he is presenting. This observation can be substantiated with the comment of Kate Teltscher, travel critic, in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*: "The turn towards oral history in *A Million Mutinies Now* is uncharacteristic both of Naipaul's oeuvre and, more generally, of contemporary travel writing. With the writer's subjectivity centre stage, India usually serves as a backdrop - be it charming, exotic, infuriating, or comic-to the narrator's travels."⁸ From this comment, it could be inferred that India served as the best backdrop to present all the disillusionment that the writer could have. Through the protagonist Jagan, in R. K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*, Naipaul makes the character voice out the opinion that he had about India as an Indian who experienced the country. Jagan, the character speaks in *India: a Wounded Civilization*: "Why do you blame the country for everything? It has been good enough for four hundred millions, remembering the heritage of Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita and all the trials and sufferings he had undergone to win Independence." This comment by Jagan, the third person in the narrative, Naipaul is emphasizing that India should not be blamed for everything that happened in the present. The use of the narrative voice of Jagan does fictionalize the travel narratives. Naipaul's narrative ends with an optimistic note for the development of India. He explains in *India: a Wounded Civilization*: "The past can now be possessed only by inquiry and scholarship,

by intellectual rather than spiritual discipline. Past has to be seen to be dead: or the past will kill.” From this comment it could be seen that Naipaul’s vision of India is more consolidated and focused on the country’s future, predicting the changes that may occur in the civilization in due course, leaving a positive note for the people. But at the same place he is commenting against spiritual discipline and highlights on the need for intellectual scholarship. This is a negative remark on Indian ideologies. Mel Gussow, remarked: “The tone of his book signifies a certain mellowing on his part, but it is clear that he is still a man of the most passionate convictions.”⁹ This comment shows that Naipaul had written the Indian travel narratives by keeping a clear intention/motive of what need to be highlighted through his narrative. His travel narratives are especially meant for appealing to the Western readers.

Another note worthy aspect of the study of the encounter of Indian culture by Naipaul is that he assessed India in relation with Trinidad. This in return created a culture shock in the writer. This is the major reason for his discontent in India as evident in *India: A Wounded Civilization*. He remarks: “But the question of comparison did not arise. The world outside India was to be judged by its own standards-India was not to be judged. India was only to be experienced in the Indian way.”¹⁰ Thus, India is represented by Naipaul based on his individual experiences in the country.

Naipaul’s India series of travel narratives could be seen as shifting its focus from the descriptions of the Indian religion, beliefs etc., to the mannerisms of the people and showing that culture promotes subjugation of humanity in the form of customs and traditions that the people follow. This is explained in the description of the Rajasthani woman. Indian women were presented by the writer as slowly retrieving into their house hold chores as part of their culture. The voices of the women were muted according to the writer when he had visited Rajasthan. He comments in *India: a Wounded Civilization*: “The women had withdrawn-so many of them, below their red or orange Rajasthani veil, only girls, children, but already with children of their own.” Naipaul’s attention does focus only in a smaller canvas to the women who voluntarily have chosen to live for the

welfare of their family. He does not point at the women who came out of their houses for fighting for India's Independence. This shows that he is selective in his description of the people to show only the subjugation and decay that the people suffered from. It should also be noted that Naipaul's travel narratives on India as such do not give sufficient space for women representations.

As observed from this comment, Indian civilization is slowly moving back to its yoke stage. This stage creates ignorance and indifference in the attitude of the indigenous people towards the need for cultural progress. Political, economic and racial crisis is documented in the narrative as the reason for India's underdevelopment. Contact between individuals is less with the intervention of religious belief and caste system. This has led each community to become self dependent and to move away from the 'other'. The chaos that India suffered from is seen from the narrative as further contributed by many factors including social and political issues. This stresses on the observation that 'culture' has deeper relations with the individual and collective identity that the citizens of a particular civilization share. This is laid emphasis on by Naipaul in *India: A Wounded Civilization*, when he talks about the social conditions of India:

“In 1974, India had appeared to stall, with civil disobedience campaigns, strikes, and student disturbances. The political issues were real, but they obscured the bigger crisis. The corruption of which the opposition spoke and indiscipline of which the rulers spoke were both aspects of a moral chaos, and this could be traced back to the beginning, to Independence.”¹¹

Through the representation of the attitude of a small section of people, Naipaul is misrepresenting the Indian civilization as a whole. This is purely a Western attitude that the writer had. Billie Melman, remarks in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* thus: “Real Orientals are denied humanity, history and the authority to speak about and represent them, an authority which Orientalist travel writing reserves for occidentals.” ‘Denied humanity’ could be seen from the documentation of Naipaul about Indians.

Indians do not 'represent themselves' in Naipaul's narratives, but are re presented according to the writer's intentions. Naipaul speaks about the 'Indian identity', in *India: A Wounded Civilization*, thus: "Identity was related to a set of beliefs and rituals, knowledge of the gods, a code and an entire civilization. The loss of the past meant the loss therefore, to a nationalist-minded man, of a motive for action."¹² The knowledge of the country, of the traveler/writer, changes the identity of the citizen. This shows that identity is related with culture as the individual has an individual and collective identity of which he/she is a part. What Indians lacked in the present context of the narrative is the sense of 'collective identity' of being part of the Indian civilization. Most of the Indians are presented by the writer/traveler as unaware of the historical past of India. Pratap Bhanu Mehta disagrees to this point in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* and remarks:

"In *India: A Wounded Civilization*, Naipaul's chief concern was the lack of proper historical awareness. He insistently attributes this intellectual depletion to centuries of conquest for Naipaul conquest's chief achievement is to distort historical consciousness. European colonialism had at least this redeeming feature: it began to impart an inchoate sense of Indians to India's own inadequacies, but it produced no intellectual movement that could allow India to transcend those adequacies."¹³

Naipaul's observation of the 'cultural fracture' that occurred to India is represented through the images of the destroyed 'monuments' of Vijayanagara empire. They are presented by him as a burden for human memory. The reason for the cause of long years of destruction that India suffered from does not gain importance in Naipaul's travel enquiry. This is a deliberate omission by him in his travel narrative. He could be seen brooding more on the decay of Indian civilization in his narration. He remarks in *India: A Wounded Civilization*: "life goes on, the past continues. After conquest and destruction, the past simply reasserts itself."¹⁴ The casualness with which Naipaul describes the cultural history of India does not do justice to the real condition of the civilization.

After the presentation of the physical depletion that India suffered from the Europeans, Naipaul is focusing on the intellectual depletion of Indians. This was presented by him as a major reason for the decay of the civilization. He mentions in *India: a Wounded Civilization* that the crisis of India is not only political or economic. The larger crisis is of a wounded old civilization that has at last become aware of its inadequacies and is without the intellectual mean to move ahead.

This is another mode of branding the Indians as intellectually poor and constructing a new negative identity for Indians. This comment provides a negative identity for Indians in the minds of the readers who have not been to India even once.

Indians are so obsessed with their caste and religious system that the feeling of being a single race was slowly wiped away from their culture. A common shared set of ideology is what the country lacked. Naipaul is trying through his narrative to make the people aware of their lacking in India. While considering his intention in a positive sense, the readers expected for reading his narratives are Indians so that India could progress in future. He narrates considering that his readers are Indians. The reformation that the writer aims in the society could be seen in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, when he remarks:

“You had two battles: one to cleanse the country of foreign rule and the other to cleanse oneself. One looked outward: the other inward. I see no reason why the two cannot be combined. If this is not done then ten years later people will say: “Why did not you tell us? Look at the mess we are in now?”¹⁵

This remark of Naipaul presents the clear picture of the decay and retreat of Indian civilization. This had created a negative identity on the civilization and had created much envy by his admirers. Purabi Panwar’s comment on the hostility and criticism that Naipaul had to face after publishing his Indian travel narratives in *V. S. Naipaul: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* thus:

“Before, during and after his many journeys Naipaul has made both overt and covert observations on nations, cultures, communities and races, which have forced world-wide attention. His book of course testifies to his powers as a shrewd delineator of people, situations and settings, and reflects his unusual talent for ‘the telling detail and the penetrating observation based on it. But they also carry these notations of experiences and encounters, inextricably mixed up with his innate predilections and prejudices. Naipaul has, as a result, roused not only much controversy and provocation but bitter hostility and resentment too. All along his writing career till date, he has drawn a formidable envy of admirers and detractors, of those who hugely eulogize him and those who treat him as a contraband item.”¹⁶

Naipaul does not stand by to interrogate or interpret. He merely presents. And what is presented could lead us to suspect the quality of travel narratives. They are genuine, no doubt, but are documents of doubt and prejudice. Cultural decay presented in the form of blind religious fanaticism is seen as overpowering the travel narrative on India. According to Naipaul, social unrest wiped out the remnants of old culture. Even though Indians try for a retreat to its old cultural system, it is not possible according to him. He remarks in *India: A Wounded Civilization*: “Men cannot easily unlearn new modes of feeling. Retreat is no longer possible. Even the ashrams and the holy men (with their executive jets, their international followings, and their public-relations men) are no longer what they were.”¹⁷ This comment highlights that the Indian culture is under slow transformation by apeing the West. Naipaul feels in *India: A Wounded Civilization*, that the changes that had happened to Indian culture purports “parody: and sometimes unconscious mimicry.” The use of the term ‘unconscious mimicry’ stresses on the modern culture of Indians by apeing the West. The disintegration of the Hindu culture is represented by Naipaul through his travel narratives. The most awful form of beggary was seen in Bombay as he was able to experience it closely and comment on it in *India: A Wounded Civilization*:

“The beggars themselves, forgetting their Hindu function, also pester tourists: and the tourists misinterpret the whole business, seeing in the beggary of the few the beggary of all. Beggars have become a nuisance and a disgrace. By becoming numerous they have lost their place in the Hindu system and have no claim on anyone.”¹⁸

Colonization has given a platform for India and its citizens to contemplate on the country's position in the world. Hence the notion of a new cultural consciousness arose in the country after the political chaos. This could not be completely neglected even though Naipaul's narrative contradicts this notion. The shaping of Indian culture according to Naipaul's travel narrative was thus: “Caste and clan are more than brotherhoods; they define the individual completely. The individual is never on his own: he is always fundamentally a member of his group, with a complex apparatus of rules, rituals and taboos”¹⁹.

Indian culture does not provide individual identity to the people. People are divided into groups sharing a collective identity through rituals and rules of the civilization. The behavior of every individual was according to their groups will. Indian culture was formulated by the roles that each individual performed. Indian heritage and culture could hence be seen as lost with the passage of time, during the long years of war and conquest that have to be rediscovered. The reason for the social and political crisis that India suffered from is due to the cultural confusion that Indians are facing in the present. Naipaul remarks in *India: A Wounded Civilization* thus:

“‘Archaic emotions,’ ‘nostalgic memories’: when these were awakened by Gandhi, India became free. But the India created in this way had to stall. Gandhi took India out of one kind of Kal Yuga, one kind of Black age: his success inevitably pushed it back into another.”²⁰

The doom of the civilization could be seen when the traveller/writer branded India as ‘Kal Yuga’ or ‘Black age’. This is a kind of ‘negative identity’ assigned to Indian

civilization. Naipaul's presentation of India in his travel narratives was as a land of diverse beliefs and customs. Religious beliefs of the people are given emphasis in his travel narratives. A life without religious beliefs would make the people feel lost according to the writer. Every object that he saw in India was assigned certain meanings. They were charged with the blind beliefs of the people. Naipaul suggests in *India: A Wounded Civilization*, the example of the religious belief of Bengal: "The truth is frightening, as I learned only recently near the end of the book. The pumpkin, in Bengal and adjoining areas, is a vegetable substitute for a living sacrifice: the male hand was therefore necessary."²¹ Religious beliefs of the Indians is a theme that the writer is obsessed with throughout his travel narratives. It is seen by Naipaul as a hindrance for the progress of Indian culture as he was unable to find any significance for these beliefs. He mentions in *India: A Wounded Civilization* thus: "the memories of that India, which lived on into my childhood in Trinidad, are like trapdoors into a bottomless past." The imagery that the writer/narrator employs while referring to the religious beliefs of the Indians as 'trapdoors' that lead to 'bottomless past' indirectly conveys to the readers the discontent that Naipaul had with the blind beliefs.

Naipaul's opinions on India were based on the way in which he perceived Indian culture. The whole atmosphere prevailing in the narrative was that of disillusionment and discontent due to the 'culture shock' that he experienced due to his conflicting identities. He could be seen as leading the readers to view only those aspects that he felt had created 'cultural decay' in India. These do not provide sufficient information about the point of view of the indigenous people of India. Thus, India is presented with a new cultural identity by Naipaul through his travel narrative by documenting it as a land of 'cultural decay' that supports his views, as a traveler/writer, after his travels.

5.3 RUTHLESS EXPOSITION OF THE THIRD WORLD MALADIES

Naipaul aptly portrays the ordeals and absurdities of living in the new Third-World countries. He seems quite undeluded about the sleaziness of much contemporary history

and not hopeful about its consequences. In this novel, he is concerned with the depiction of what happens in those unfortunate countries that have just freed themselves from colonial rule but unable to attain the uncertain blessings of modernity. *A Bend in the River* is a novel that disturbs the reader through its reflections on the very idea of civilization.

Philip Langran points out:

“As Naipaul goes on to examine other countries, other societies and other races than his own, with an almost clinical precision, there emerges that detached voice which is a mark of his maturity as a writer. He further develops a world view in which the contradictions and inconsistencies of his own displaced community are seen as symptoms of a more general disorder. The causes behind this disorder are complex and arise chiefly from the disrupting influence of the colonial past and the consequent conflicting values of an essentially Christian European tradition with a wide range of non-Christian cultures. As Naipaul explores the confusion of racial, cultural and political loyalties the universal legacies of colonialism, his insistence on individual responsibility and intellectual striving becomes absolute.”²²

This conviction of Naipaul is eloquently expressed in almost all his later novels and his non-fictional works in which he seems to affirm such values as rationalism, historical analysis, social inquiry - the chief attribute of Western intellectual tradition and in the affirmation of which he condemns "the instinctive life."²³ His insistence on individual responsibility and the conviction that the individual must reassess his position in the world is clearly expressed in the opening lines of *A Bend in the River*: "THE WORLD IS what it is; men who are nothing, who allow them to become nothing, have no place in it."²⁴ The opening words hint at the themes that are in store for the reader of the novel. It is the ultimate loneliness of the modern man and the dearth of resources in any of the

civilized ideals and ideologies that may be of some help in the ordering of modern man's life in a chaotic world. Here, Naipaul shows how in the final moment man has to rely on his own personal strength and resources.

Naipaul uses Africa as a text to preach magnificently upon the sickness of a world losing touch with its past. The fact that Naipaul has decided not to name either the town or the country or the river in the novel reveals his purpose of hinting at the universal quality of the problem portrayed. The namelessness of the places as such enables one to understand not just Africa but the modern world in general. Indeed the end is the same for any country which has to deal with a tyrant like the Big Man. People are fated to face the dilemma of choosing between their country's present and its past.

Naipaul's masterpiece, *The Mimic Men*, deals with the irremediable disorder of the new world. Ralph Singh, the protagonist of the novel is controlled by intellect and he surrenders himself to the order of Nothingness. Here again the narrator of the story is the chief protagonist himself. The protagonist spends his childhood on the island of Isabella, goes abroad to attend school in England, marries an English girl, and returns to the newly independent homeland where he makes money and rides the tide to nationalistic fervor to political power. But eventually he finds himself an exile from Isabella and has to settle down in London.

Naipaul might have called this novel "Hollow Men" if T.S. Eliot had not already used this title for one of his poems. The theme of this novel, like the theme of Eliot's poem, is corruption - corruption of the body politic and corruption of the individual human soul. This theme is emphasized by the narrator's sense of corruption of the human body in relationships where one would have been aware only of the body's pleasures. The novel takes the form of an autobiography of the chief character, Ralph Kripal Singh. It is of particular relevance to everybody belonging to a country which goes through a period of rapid political change after having achieved independence from foreign rule.

In the Mimic Men the narrator functions as a moral consciousness which analyses, evaluates and thus adds a new dimension that had been lacking in the earlier novels. It also marks an important phase in Naipaul's career. The novel is significant for various reasons. It is perhaps the clearest expression of the themes that shape Naipaul's novels, namely, the escape of the Third World into fantasy on being poverty - stricken and isolated on the fringes of power, the sprouting up of various political and religious movements offer a sense of drama and empty excitement finally ending up in disorder, politics dominated by appeals to race and colour, the absence of real power, myths, culture or competence which have resulted in tendency to mimic, and a feeling of homelessness and identity crisis. *The Mimic Men* also seems to provide a reply to criticism which charges Naipaul with being an exponent of the metropolitan values and ideologies. And, *The Mimic Men* clearly marks the end of "and absorption with Naipaul's personal homelessness, a final release from a barren cycle of events."²⁵ As Naipaul in this novel is concerned with the rootlessness and placelessness of a typical modern man, let alone a colonial individual.

Naipaul's later novels deal with the subject of migration and its aftermath which involves the questions of identity, rootlessness, cultural difference, assimilation, unconquerable status and futility. The tone for this is set, for the first time, in *The Mimic Men*. Naipaul presents the predicament of Ralph Singh, the protagonist of the novel, to be the same as that of any modern man including an ex-colonizer. The novel is told in the form of memoirs by the main character that is implicitly criticized by what he actually reveals about himself. It starts and ends in the present with the narrative shifting back and forth in time between Ralph Singh's childhood, student life in London, his return to the island, his political career and in London. What we actually see is a sequence of contrasting events to build a unified plot. As Bruce King points out, "There is an increasing mastery of striking phrases. The distillation of a scene to epigram, a striking image or a fragment of conversation allows freedom from filling in narrative details and chronology."²⁶

Ralph Singh, the protagonist - narrator of the novel sets out to write down his experiences with the hope of fashioning an order out of the various unrelated adventures and encounters through which he had been. He struggles like an artist to create something, to discover some meaning out of the muddled state of affairs, which his life has been. That is why this act of writing his autobiography turns out to be more than a discovery. It becomes a recovery, a retrieval of a blighted individual as a free individual with a clear and purged consciousness. At another level, this political autobiography transcends from the level of a personal, confessional report to an existential allegory of the modern man.

Ralph Singh refers to this particular period of his life as something in parenthesis. The story he records can be described as tracing Ralph Singh's transition from innocence to experience and his passage from external disorder to personal harmony. Rao states, "The writing of his story, becomes the very means to endure the terror, shipwreck, abandonment and loneliness of his situation."²⁷

By analyzing and interpreting his own experiences he hopes to find some order within the chaos of the present, and the uncertainty of the future in the contemporary colonial society. The social analysis which he attempts in *The Mimic Men* is not confined to the West Indies but extends to the entire Third World.

The latest novel, *The Mimic Men*, directly portrays the new order and completes the model of an emergent country. Here Naipaul makes an attempt to readjust his perspective to that of the exile that looks outward instead of homeward, the free man who imposes order on his freedom by giving it the form of memoirs. Naipaul at the same time does devote his energies solely to tackle the problem of rootlessness. He goes beyond and brings to light the suffocating littleness of his island home and the other Third-World societies as such. In this Endeavour what aids him the most are his first-hand encounters with these societies, his keen observation and a total detachment.

Though Naipaul writes about societies he cannot belong, he is not detached and non-committal. Though his work is a product of multi-dimensional exposure to different

cultures, races and nations and societies in transition, his literary imagination transcends all limits and his themes acquire universal significance. His work presents profound and moving truths about the human situation. He propagates the need for a society which provides means of establishing identity through shared heritage. Naipaul has invited protests from the Caribbean, Africa, India and the world of Islam. At times he does appear unfair. He is, at times, too negative and agnostic. He has been criticized for his unsympathetic attitude towards The Third World countries. The subjects Naipaul has been concerned with are representative and typical of a post-colonial world. His approach is direct. In his works, man is presented in an entirely naturalistic materialistic setting and all institutions - religious, social and political are viewed with skepticism and doubt. His focus is on stunted histories, fragmented cultures and disintegrated individuals.

He does not romanticize or sentimentalize his subject. His is the authentic voice of his times endowed with a keen political sense and a sharpened perception of reality. He offers no political ideology; follows no party line. He has no solution to offer, spiritual or otherwise. He does not want to be considered a political writer. Yet he is effective in defining human problems of universal application - open to all whose identity is at odds with the society. For him and his characters, the solution to their fundamental problem is not outside them. His work is informed by a sense of human possibility and the creative activity of the mind. His art is an activity of registering a significant human experience.

5.4 CORRUPTION, TERRORISM AND INTELLECTUAL DEFICIENCIES IN EX-COLONIES

Naipaul's third novel *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1959) is about examining the political dimensions of the Trinidadian rural society during the second general elections in Trinidad (1950). Champa Rao Mohan rightly remarks, "the novel examines the East Indian community within the context of the newly- emerging- colonial capitalist society during a period of growing social and political awareness."²⁸

The setting of this novel is like of the earlier two novels of Naipaul. Characters and events of the novel make it evident that the novel is a sequence of *The Mystic Masseur*. The novel is third in the trilogy. The society in the novel is a corrupt, divided, and hollow and full of opportunist, illiterates, and self centered people and is not suitable for the modern concept of Democracy. The elections promote self –interests of the people. The society, dominated by colonizers is not prepared for democratic vision because they have been allowed to suppress the demands for freedom of colonized people. It was a surprise for them because living in a colonial society does not permit their demands and if anything comes to them without any popular agitation, taking the people by surprise. People were unprepared for it. They were still unaware of its depths and benefits. Through their participation in the first election in *The Mystic Masseur*, they have become conscious of the value of their votes and were always ready to exploit the candidates. As Baksh, the Muslim vote Bank understands “Now is different. People leaning you (Harbans) have to spend on them.”²⁹ Everyone is out to take bribes. Everyone is a trickster. Everybody is worshipper of Mammon. Chittranjan’s importance is because of his wealth money as in the second chapter Foam comments that easily the most important person in Elvira was Chittranjan. And there was no mystery why? He looked rich and was rich.

Everybody is immoral, deceitful, and disloyal in this valueless society. They all are mercenary in their motives. The older generation- Baksh, his wife, Ramlogan, Pt. Dhaniram, Chittranjan- all have reconciled to their colonial present. But the younger generation-Nelly, Lorkhoor, Foam, Harbans’s son, Dulhain, Teacher Francis- all want to leave the colonial world of Elvira. They are well aware of the deprived environment of the society. They constantly remain dwelling in a mood of despair and they wait for an opportunity to quit. Foam, Harbans’s campaign manager, a representative of younger generation and their aspirations sums up the feeling of all in these words, “We is still creeping, we is a creeping nation.”³⁰

This realization is a direct hint of their helplessness and uselessness in a colonial society. Even the election, democracy and winning of a candidate of their own choice cannot improve their position. Absence of feeling of nationalism among people of a colonial society makes its inhabitants totally self-centered and devoid of moral values. The reference to two 'white' women at the very start of the novel and a 'black' bitch and Surajat Harbans's behavior towards them shows the high esteemed position of 'white' in this colonial society. The remark of fallen women, "We're always all right", shows sense of supremacy of 'whites' over Colonized. By calling Election "nonsense" Harbans initially shows his non-seriousness towards it clearly representing colonized people's passivity about knowing principles of Democracy.

The society here is not only corrupt but is also full of tricksters like Baksh. It is "backward" and pretentious. The very name of Baksh's shop 'London Tailoring Est.', shows the attraction of colonized people towards their rulers i.e. colonizers. Trinidad society is poor and uncivilized where people lack manners. 'Black' and 'white' only two colors dominate the novel. 'Black Bitch' 'white women', 'black' gush, 'white' shirt, 'white' beard, 'black' little man indicate presence of two worlds- one of colonized and the other of colonizers. Sir Francis's remarks about democracy in Elvira show colonizer's trick to divert attention of colonized as this new constitution is a trick, Mr. Chittarjan, Just another British trick to demoralize the people.

Being a post colonial novelist, if his (Naipaul's) initial novels draw his experiences as an inhabitant of a colonial society but his later novels- *The Mimic Men*, *A Flag on the Island*, *In a Free State*, *Guerrillas*, *A Bend in the River* are set in ex-colonial societies inherent to such societies. In these post Imperial societies, Naipaul's observant eye and his faithful portrayal makes it clear that even after getting the political independence these ex-colonies are in grip of Imperialist states through neocolonialism.

In these novels through the lost and in-secured protagonists, Naipaul as a visionary shows the predicament of modern men in the present day world. This provides universality to

these novels. As an observer and interpreter of the ex-colonies, he critically exposes the inadequacies of these societies. He believes these are outcome of the unconscious acceptance of the fame and values of the colonizing culture. The crippling effect of cultural colonization manifests in the inability of the former colonized people to stand independently on their own. They continue their dependence on West for ideas and technology. Intellectual as well as financial dependence of the Third world countries on the West has made them vulnerable to neo-colonialism. It can be further explained in the way the first four novels of Naipaul show “mimicking” attitude of colonized people in the hope of totally identifying with them and the result is a cultural loss and loss of identity. Tridib Sengupta in an article published in a Bengali Magazine ‘Anushtup’, where he deconstructs Homi Bhabha’s, discussion of post colonial culture when Bhabha’s notion of Hybridity is in question because Sen-Gupta denies that the unequal relationship between colonizers and colonized cannot be sustained. The relationship at bottom still remains unequal and exploitative; leading to huge surplus transfer from the third world to the first world. The only snag is the elusive character of the process which makes it exploiting (colonizing) agency. Even after independence, globalization and the political freedom of these Ex-colonies could not transcend the opposition between Imperialist, capital and exploited colony or neo-colony remains very much relevant even in this globalised world, and it is unnecessary to stop at the mere appearance of ‘subjectlessness’. If Cultural hybridity could not reconcile between (as Sengupta demonstrates) the agent and the target (victim) of colonial “persuasion” in a colonial society then between them only a relationship of “mimicry” is possible. As the heterogeneous colonial society fails to provide a collective reaction to colonizers, the post colonial society, then “homogeneous” (despite heterogeneity, having a national identify) society of Native, having their own flag and name fails to give a sense of security. The culture of colonized is concealed to be “heterogeneous” and a native finds himself unable to get any sustaining power in that alien culture. No collaboration is possible and again only “mimicry” and its predestined failure remains. The distinct cultural identity of the natives remains in a displaced mode. But the colonized realizes the futility of “mimicry”.

He becomes “reformed”, “changed”, even while refining his identity in the new equation and he starts or moves back to his authentic original culture but the basic equation still remains unchanged. He feels incapable and his full participation in making the country remains questionable. People of ex-colonies fail to overcome the feel of being colonized and the new environment of their high expectation when fails to provide them some sense of rootedness and satisfaction they become contemptuous of this changed situation and start criticizing their own history and heritage. Their dead tradition and dead past threaten the very existence of these people and they want to escape from the reality as soon as possible following a journey of rejection. These people are caught in the conflict between order, destruction corruption and truth, the old and the new. They attempt to achieve glory of the colonial culture. Naipaul himself explains this dilemma in an interview with Shankar Israel:

“The people saw were little people I who were mimicking upper-class respectability. They had been slaves, and you can’t write about trust in the way that Tolstoy wrote about, even his backward society-for his society was while and one I knew was not.”³¹

The sense of Non-belongingness, cultural bankruptcy alienated self, displacement and, vulgarity, brutality, sordidness and irrationality of the modern world create stress typed men devoid of any personality. The futility of their search in the values of a foreign culture provides them no identity but an embarrassment, a failure, a sense of dejection that makes all these people to accept their ‘nothing’ position and they reconcile with it or they want to escape to the world where they have no connection of past and of future (no fantasy land).

Naipaul touches another point in rendering post colonial societies. He presents a threatening picture of these countries after colonial rule is over. During colonial rule the people of these countries were feared to misuse their abilities, capability, intellectuality and reliability. So after getting independence they people were not ready to keep the

independence intact. So once released from colonial safe world these countries become chaotic as there was absence of any central force which could hold the whole country in a single thread. The result was anarchy everywhere leading to insecurity, brutality and corruption. There is no cohesive force to hold the society together the result is instable and insecure life of its inhabitants. They are either confused or misguided. They feel 'outsider' in their own society and own country. The excitement of freedom ends in revolution and civil war. Everybody wants his share.

The people are restless within the country moving from one place to another, feeling pains of exile. In such an atmosphere the leaders are still same either colonizers themselves in the disguise of diplomats or the technicians or foreign returned native who see the world through the eyes of colonizers. The artificiality still pervades there. Even Europe, a symbol of order and security is denounced in these novels of his ex – colonies. The Europe presented in the novel is shrunken, mean and forbidding place. In doing so Naipaul cast off the criticism of being critical just of Third World societies.

Analyzing Naipaul's novels in context of above points confirms his position as just not an analyzer of 'suppressed histories' but as a delineator of all 'histories' of all societies of the world, of human world. The man he presents in his novels from *The Mystic Masseur* to *A Bend in the River* are not representatives of colonial and post colonial world, they are more than that , they emerge out to be human beings who belong to the world community. Their failure, tensions, fears, problems, mental trauma, insecurity, rootedness, inferiority or superiority are of modern man.

Cultural colonialism is reflected in adoption of colonizers' religion, the education system, and Singh's father's missionary connections and from many more examples of such. The examples of colonial supremacy and colonizer's attitude of imposing their language, literature and thoughts in the mind of colonized can be traced from Singh's memoirs. His taking of "Apple" to the teacher , his memory of King (British), King's coronation, his way of writing an application ,his memories about Deschampsneufs – a French and

Browne – a Negro, his references to American magazines, his self-baptism (his name changing) Ranjeet Kripal Singh to R.R.K. Singh in mimicking French with an initial name –Ralph. Singh’s colonial education makes him to mimic his masters – the colonizers adopting their manners and this remains his habit till end. Hok a Negro boy’s attitude towards his mother when he denies his relation with her shows ‘inferiority ‘of a lower race in front of a ‘superior’ race. Even the name of the school shows impact of colonialism i.e. Isabella Imperial. Reaction of Spanish people towards Negroes is another example of colonizer supremacy of Spanish. Major Grunt, the school teacher’s mockery is another sign of colonial supremacy and Bowne’s reaction is a reaction of a colonized revolutionary. Singh’s father’s reaction in becoming leader of poor—Gurudeva we see a raised colonial voice but the passivity of colonial society made it to fail.

Tamango, the racing horse of Deschampsneufs is named after an African slave, another example of colonizers hatred for native and it was their insult. Like in *Miguel Street* and *The Mystic Masseur* here also we find an aspiration of colonized people to match their colonizers by getting their education in their language. After schooling all -Singh, Browne, Hok, Deschampsneufs get jobs and even the professions are divided among colonized and colonizers. Deschampsneufs gets a job in bank. They were reserved, quite sensibly for those whose families had some secure –rather than lustful and distant experience of money; and these jobs had as a result acquired the glamour of whiteness and privilege.

Cecil’s behavior with poor people in bullying them and mistreating them is a reminder of being ‘superior’ over Negroes. In one sense this behavior of Cecil, who belongs to a rich class towards poor is just not an imitation of colonizers but it represents all societies of the world including dominating societies also where if no color, caste, interracial division but class division persists. The relation between Cecil and his bodyguard Negro Cecil is of master and servant, gangster and henchman game. The bohemian life of his boyhood with Cecil and Negro Cecil shows the growing uneasiness of Singh’s personality for not having a sense of rootedness in the deprived colonial society. This feeling invokes and

confirms his desire to leave the island. The Deschampsneufs couple's prophecy about Singh and Mr. Deschampsneufs analysis of East Indian community for being 'long vision' which makes them a misfit in a multi-racial society shows the reality in a colonial society, from the point of a class that puts himself as equals to the colonizers. Mr. Deschampsneufs' attitude of not shaking hand with a colonized is a reminder of colonizers' supremacy. In his migration to London, Singh leaves his past to start a fresh life but the warning of Deschampsneufs that he will come back makes him uncomfortable and fills in him a horror of being failed and he fails in his attempt – goes back with a white wife and fails in their relation also when Sandra leaves him and here ends II part of the novel.

Browne, his childhood friend, a Negro man, a pamphleteer, an occasional editor, a writer becomes the voice of Negroes. But he has also developed a strong materialistic attitude; he used to confess if I thought black people were handling my few cents I couldn't sleep too well. He develops all the traits of a modern politician. The way of his articulation, his thoughts in his writing, his preference for the company of other races shows discomfort of colonized in an ex-colony but he shows that he has achieved everything. In become the representative of his people he moves away from them. Like him Singh also learns to pose serenity in an atmosphere of chaos, misleading their own people to cultivate their private and personal interests. The colonial corruption has been replaced by intrigue, treachery, dishonesty, cheating and anarchy.

The order of colonial rule is disturbed. Political supremacy is also challenged. And now the colonized that enter in vicious circle of politics were not illiterate and puppets and thus colonial rule was overthrown by Brownie, Singh and the socialist. The society now is governed by those who are incompetent, fearsome, dishonest, non-courageous and opportunist without any 'solidity' of their own or the society. Their lack of confidence in both- in the other people as well as in themselves makes the social set up of this ex-colony devoid of any central force. It is no more than the pace of chaos on which strict limits have been imposed.

This neo colonialism cause distress among the natives who feel betrayed and cheated nothing has changed for them; they still feel that they are residing in a colony. To make them silent government uses mean methods by exposing their inadequacies, and the nation becomes free to accept technical aid and experts on short term contracts from London. Ministers appoint English secretaries claiming revulsion that the black men served by the white. This is the trick of the new government to spread racial antagonism among people to meet their self interests. They pose as if they are the voice of the majority and try to show that they are maintaining homogeneous society. But in maintaining homogeneity of the society heterogeneousness suffers and result is devastating hatred and racial feeling. To divert people's attention from these issues of the society, the government shows the mirror of development and in the process foreign companies come to the land and imported substances from outside start scattering the local market. This is neo- colonialism, an indirect way to colonize a country.

Thus this novel of V.S. Naipaul reflects inability of a newly independent country to develop in real sense because of inherent deficiencies of ex colonial society. Duality of personality and life of a colonial is highlighted in the novel, when Singh and other children want to conceal their real life of the home. All of them learn deception in their colonial society and want to migrate in a fantasy land; their failure to go there and their inability to grasp reality make them mimics. Dissatisfied with his own society, his attempt to find it in the society of colonizers, is the cause of failure of his marriage with Sandra. He turns to politics to redefine his sense of being lost, and his failure to bring about the nationalization of the sugar estates provokes race-riots and he is forced to make his escape to London. Through Singh, Naipaul not only presents a candid picture of a colonial society and its people but also conditions in an ex-colony and also to neo colonialism to which the emergent nation fall victim because of their dependence on outside power. The economy thus suffers due to the manipulations of foreign investors.

Industrialization in such a country is bound to end up as import game and thus political independence is nothing more than a mockery. The phase in Naipaul's fictional world

after *The Mimic Men* reflects his increasing pre occupation with the post colonial Third World scene. This phase also shows his development as a writer, he started to develop cosmopolitan attitude. By disowning and moving away from strictly personal experience, he widens his vision crossing the boundaries of culture and nation when he filters the society in his work through ‘outsiders’. He rejects his own ancestry by entering into troubled consciousnesses of others. This opens new vista and his probing in other culture and nations illustrates search for parallels to his own past. None of the works under consideration in this phase – *In a Free State*, *Guerrilla*, *A Bend in the River* configure a purely national , ethnic, or intimately personal concern.

The second story “The Raffle” shows meanness of profession like that of “Education” in colonial Trinidad where the sacredness and decorum of a teacher is not maintained. They are also corrupt, mean cruel towards colonized people. They are involved in the game of treachery, bigamy and corruption. The story unfolds the events how Mr. Hinds cheat the narrator boy and the story also highlights the cruel treatment the children get at colonial school.

5.5 INTELLECTUAL PARASITISM LED TO MARGINALIZATION

Colonialism began in late fifteenth century in different parts of the world as a power catchment of small, undeveloped, underdeveloped nations by strong developed nations of Europe. During this power game, the ruling nation exploited all the natural resources as well as man power for their self interest and this ruling class was called Imperial power/colonizer and the ruled ones are called colonized. After approximately a rule of about three hundred years by Imperial powers, the voice was raised against them by the natives of the colonies and colonizers start receding from the colonies in the second half of twentieth century.

The core of V. S. Naipaul’s complex art of fiction is an analysis of the complexities of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, whether they are his earlier adept comedies about racially complex and culturally insecure communities of Trinidad,

or the somber serious work of his later phase portraying English societies. In the middle phase of his career, he reflects the miseries generated in the life of ex-colonial people by the collision of their old and their new rulers. Thus Naipaul's novel covers a journey from colonial mimicry and illiteracy to the existential trauma and finally the colonized politics in the phase of decolonization.

He is certainly a typical post colonial voice talking of the 'marginal' and 'displaced' dealing extensively with shifting identities, roots, homes and changing realities of those who are homeless and rootless. Belonging to triple identity (West Indian, Indian and British) with a sense of non belongingness, Naipaul does not portray hero, rather evolves protagonists in his fiction where they become instrumental in outpouring their creator's voice. Naipaul, being an expatriate writer matures in his perception in his fictions. There is a gradual shift in his attitude from his initial misunderstanding of his homeland and its people, to the understanding of the people and in turn of himself. From an initial contemptuous, hostile attitude towards his country, he makes his protagonists to feel at home. As Trinidad was a former British colony and the society in which Naipaul was born and brought up was a colonial society and as Naipaul is a descendant of indentured laborer class, there runs an under- current note of colonial consciousness in almost all of his novels, be it works of his apprenticeship period or the novels of his matured phase.

Naipaul's protagonists in his earlier four books belong to a 'deprived' society of Trinidad, which even in a post colonial set up is a totally disorganized, hollow, demoralized society and so are its inhabitants. They all carry the burden of being colonials on their shoulder because they have lived under a mental colonialism not only physically but also mentally. Although they have freed themselves from political colonialism, yet in their behavior as well as in their aspiration and ambitions, these people still copy their Imperialists and become 'mimics'. These people with a colonial consciousness which is a sum of their experiences through political, social, ethnical and cultural encounter during the ruling period or even after getting independence force the natives of the colony on the brink of losing their individuality and identity become more

mimics- both in behavior as well as in their thought process. This sterilization makes them sometime to get involved in the struggle (it may be inner or outer both) for freedom, expatriation, cultural confrontations, uprooting and transplantation, alienation (from self and society both) and to be involved in search for identity.

Naipaul also points out that colonialism brought together impoverished groups of people together to get them independence from their ruling colonizers and after getting that long aspired political freedom, they could not come out from the feeling of failure as an individual. They could not well establish their society and failed to provide enough opportunity to themselves. They find themselves totally unable to provide their nation strength of political solidity and they lost those human values which were necessary for their adherence as a man. These people felt disinherited from their folk culture and their exposure to the alien culture, its value, its literature, and its socio-political theories which make them suspicious of their own existence. In the process of reestablishment of their 'new idea of human' excellence, makes them to wander in the vast area of darkness. All this forces them to become mimics of that culture against which they waged a war. Naipaul's analysis of these colonial and post colonial societies in most of his fiction is an indirect outpouring of his own insecurities and conflicts and individuals like him. To quote Bruce king, "What begins as a vision of the West Indies, then the former colonies, became the way he viewed all lands and history."³²

The individuals of in these colonial as well as post-colonial societies feels displaced, transitional and marginalized, resulting in their dysfunctional, neurotic and infinitely sad personality which is without any dignity. Such a man has no sense of affiliation or loyalty to any particular society, culture or nationality. He becomes self centered and sometimes tries to compensate it through acquiring getting status, power and security of the new order roles in a new society. If he fails to achieve it in his own society, he flees to another one. But even this land of his imagination provides only temporary relief to him and consequently leads to homecoming.

Naipaul's protagonists suffer disillusionment. They share the same feeling as Naipaul felt in his bitterness in facing India in *An Area of Darkness* when he remarks "Content to be a colonial, without a past, without ancestors."³³ The anger, frustration and sense of futility among Naipaul's characters in his fictional world stems from their feeling of disinheritance. Even beneath the comedy and the frustration (In *The Mystic Masseur* and *Miguel Street*), there is an agonizing self awareness of being colonial admitting neither identity nor bond. The complicated world of his colonial and post colonial countries like Trinidad and Africa makes the individual to be assailed constantly by the worst fear of being left behind, Naipaul refers to such society s 'materialist' one and a 'second hand world' of mimic men.

Naipaul is very much aware of neo-colonialism in the form of assistance which post colonial countries require for sustainment in the changed circumstances after independence. Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men* realizes the fact when he accepts, "There was no true internal source of power and that no power was real which did not come from the outside."³⁴

In his outlook Naipaul is somewhat biased as in his earlier fiction, he is a pungent satirist of his own Trinidadian society. But the failure of his protagonists is a colonial and predictable failure. People are a sum of what societies make them therefore a society which is totally devoid of any guiding principle, devoid of a core of adherent values gives its inhabitants nothing but a 'borrowed eye' and a sense of absorbing themselves in fantasy. Even in his view of the fantasized world of England, Naipaul feels the same pains of dispossession, ambiguities of freedom and non-recognition. The incompetence of an individual is an inner weakness which makes him insecure. In a sense everybody is colonized temporarily in a state of decolonization when one wants to free himself.

Naipaul also mocks at the judiciary system of the colonial island through the episode of Mrs. Morgan's trial of her own children without paying any heed to their explanations. The same attitude is shown by the colonizers towards their colonial people. In XIV story

again we come across a critical remark on colonizers' nature of making a small issue into a big-one. The boy-narrator says, these people are master of propaganda. At this junction when the people of *Miguel Street* celebrate the end of Second World War, his remark expresses the hatred of natives on the success of their rulers. This is a mockery on the behavior of the colonized when they celebrate the success of their suppressor, Stupidness! Stupidnes! How black people so stupid?

Material gain is the only pursuit of these people as the society offers no dignity to them so they think only money can provide them an equivalent position with the rulers. Ideals living principles and values have no meaning in their lives. This colonial society is full of cheaters Bolo was cheated by the advertisements which appeared in two leading News papers- The Guardian and The Gazette. He develops contempt for news papers and also decides to quit from this land of "crooks" to Venezuela. But again, he is cheated when he fails to fulfill his desire to escape. This position makes him not to quit his habit of betting and gambling. He becomes suspicious, reactive and a non-believer in a society of liars. He says, These Trinidad people does only lay, lie. Lie is all they know. He is bewildered when he comes to know that his sweepstake ticket has won hundred dollars for him. He takes it another trick of Street to befool him. This shows an attitude of suspicion prevalent in the society which is an outcome of the gap of communication and faith in the people. Edward, a failed painter and his wish to paint a picture of, brown hand clasping a black one, reflects his colonial consciousness. This unfulfilled desire points out the craving of a colonized to establish a relationship with colonizer. His act of gifting tie to others and his anger at not wearing it by others in another sign of mimicry as colonized imitate dressing sense of their colonizers. His remark when he gets money from Americans for his work is also another example of his colonial consciousness. His remark shows that colonizers do not give people enough wages in return of their work. But ironically when he gets opportunity he starts imitating, rather mimicking Americans and starts behaving like them. Earlier he used to condemn the same kind of behavior. If one get a chance one start behaving with a sense of superiority over those who do not have it.

For Edward, America becomes a land of fantasy. Prior to it to all *Miguel Street* people this land was England to him America is an ideal society. This makes him rebuff the society he lives in likewise as is done by Naipaul. Naipaul's own colonial consciousness makes this shifting of fantasized world from London to America. If he had not done so, this book would not have received acceptance in Trinidad. He did not unite Trinidad and Britain together but he tried to compare Trinidad and America.

In his acceptance of failure, success in terms of material gain, he shows his inability to perceive the Trinidad society as apolitical society without any political consciousness. Absence of any feeling of nationalism in this multicultural, multilingual, and multiracial colonial society makes people to vote for personalities not issues. The colonial society denies any scope to assert, rather it stresses on acceptance.

The opening lines of the novel make it clear that it is a tale of success of Ganesh. We see the hollowness, superstitious masses, underdeveloped people and cultural vacuum of Trinidadian society is depicted in the novel. Surajpat Harbans becomes Pat Harbans in mimicking ways of his colonial rulers so that he will get universal acceptance in the multiracial society after shedding off his Hindu name. All Characters in the novel speaking wrong English with a vernacular accent is another example of colonial consciousness. Foam's remark about Christians after Mr. Cuffy's bad treatment of the Tiger- The dog shows hatred of colonized towards Christians, all you Christians always hot with god name in your mouth as though all you spend a weekend with him."

People of Elvira's gossips at Ramlogan shop show another kind of colonizer's brutality they inflict on colonized. It shows meanness of colonizers when people comment, "The British Government doesn't want Harbans to win this election they further acknowledge: "They going to spoil all the poor people votes once they get them inside the Warden office."³⁵ People like D.M.O. mimic English men in their dealing.

Every sphere of the life of the Trinidadian people in these initial novels of Naipaul has been dominated by colonizing omission. These people are treated as resources by the

Colonizers. The result is a silent acceptance of superiority of colonizers and displacement of colonized from their own culture and the result is feeling of dispossession, homelessness, alienation, mimicry and the search of self. The pain, distress, disillusion felt by the characters of these novels is result of their cultural colonization. They all are living without a community feeling as their society comprises of heterogeneous people. The racial and social complexity provides them no sense of nationality. So in all these three novels despite their colonial consciousness and some critical remarks about British people/Englishmen, they people don't express an anti-imperialistic feeling. Their sense of "belonging to the British Empire "gives them a sense of identity."³⁶

So in absence of a common culture, common religion, common color, common language and a common tradition, these people of Trinidadian society easily adopt the culture of their colonizers. Both-Creole culture of Negroes and East Indian culture of Indians came in to contact with each other in the urban society of Trinidad and in these novels Naipaul's main concerns were with East Indians and disintegration of their own culture in the colonial set up. Madhusudan Rao in his book, *Colonial Awareness: A Critical Study of the Novels of V.S. Naipaul*, "very aptly projects Naipaul as an analyzer of the deficiencies of colonial and ex colonial societies in a dispassionate manner. Cultural colonization of the society makes its inhabitants-Popo, Bogart, Bhakcu, Eddoes, Baksh, Chittaranjan to surrender completely and live passively adopting its ways."³⁷

Time and again they feel distressed and lost in a society that neither records them nor provides opportunities to flourish. *A House for Mr. Biswas* is a connecting link between colonial and ex-colonial societies of Naipaul's novel. This novel is set in the same society as depicted in his first three novels. With the same environment it endorses a positive approach to the problem of displacement where Mr. Biswas's struggle to assert himself in a deprived and disillusioned society shows man's invincible desire to maintain his individuality Mr. Biswas's journey of life shows disintegration of East Indian community and their culture in a colonial society of rural Trinidad. The novel covers the both of 'nothing' –'we' = 'I'. Very few examples are there which show awareness of Biswas and

other characters that they are a part of a British colony. They all feel the pain of being displaced from their motherland i.e. India and the whole novel portrays the burden of being Indian on their shoulder. They find themselves lost in this set of an entirely new place. Mohan's search and problems become cosmic in nature.

The setting of the novel is in a colonial rural Trinidad and novel depicts Naipaul's own boy hood experiences. It is a portrayal of the society in which he lived, felt and experienced. He does not come to any conclusion. Like his characters he shows the picture and reaction but any self realization comes neither to him nor to others. This novel is an effort of his to come to terms with his displacement and a position in the world. The duality of personality of the characters makes them mere caricatures. They gain materialistically but loose self control over themselves. Adjustment, compromise become their habits and one who fails in this attempt either flees to England or fails and some of them die and others personify split in different places. Even the success story of Ganesh proves to be a loss when he fails to have a control over himself. Education also moulds the taste of colonized people. It makes them to live in a land of colonizers' native country through their literature and to forget and neglect their own past, their history but to remember History of colonizers. Disintegration of East Indian cultural which will be discussed in next chapter, disintegration of Tulsis, realization of Mr. Biswas and his long struggle and ambition to find a place in this colonial society with his own efforts makes the rest of the plot of the novel. His sense of inner dignity provides him heroic qualities those were absent in first three novels of Naipaul. His achievement in this resource less colonial society is really a great achievement in such a situation.

Naipaul has been criticized for his severe indictment of post colonial societies in his later novels. He seems to be more inclined to Western life clues, but one can't deny the fact that he is equally critical of the English society. If the society of colonial country is chaotic the English society is equality disordered and disappointing. It is a pretentious society with inhuman people. It seems that his dislike for the Africans has something to do with his personal experience in Trinidad as a member of East Indian Community

because between Creoles and 'East Indians' remain a constant turret in Trinidad. Naipaul is impatient towards the intellectual and cultural parasitism and mimicry of the colonized people mildly in his earlier novels and sharply in his later ones. He has admiration for the positive features of Western culture- their developed civilization, their refined culture their sophisticated manners etc. But at the same time he is well aware of his distance from it. In his interview with Ian Hamilton he admits: "London is my metropolitan centre; it is my commercial centre; and yet I know that it is a kind of limbo and that I am a refugee in the same sense that I am always peripheral. One's concerns are not the concerns of local people."³⁸

Analysis of Naipaul's colonial consciousness in modern context without analyzing it in the historical perspective in one sense may be depicted as a relationship of Domination vs Subordination which is still persisting in our world where developed countries are using resources of undeveloped countries and all developing and underdeveloped countries are still under neocolonialism .For them anything foreign is accepted with an awe and craze. 'Brain- drain' in developing countries is result of this tendency of intellectual and cultural parasitism and mimicry of the West which were the reasons of Naipaul's impatience. He himself declares, My sympathy for the defeated, the futile, the abject, the idle and the parasitic gets less and less as I grow older and so decolonization can be attained when every individual will start involving him in the development of the society through his individual contribution and efforts. This Naipaul expects from modern man.

5.6 QUEST OF IDENTITY AND EXISTENTIAL DESPAIR SINCE PAST IS DEAD

The quest for order and identity is remarkable in the writings of V.S. Naipaul. Though V.S. Naipaul is certainly not the first to write about the crisis of identity, yet he is quite different in several ways from other writers. Many colonial writers (most prominently the African and Caribbean writers) have penetratingly and explicitly explored the theme of the individual's predicament in the form of rootlessness and crisis of identity, together

with the colonized man's dependence on and slavery to the western and predominantly white cultural, social and other value systems. Naipaul's novels witness the expatriate experience, a minority culture adapting to a cosmopolitan society, the changing value systems and its impact on the characters of the novel. The theme of identity crisis runs in V.S. Naipaul's fiction as well as non-fictional works.

Simply defined identity means the distinguishing character or personality of an individual. Identity is what a person is and always has been. It is also a mark of individualism and identity, at times becomes the stamp or hallmark of a person, at other times it can be a habit or a customary behavior or characteristic trait of an individual. It assures one's life and career in the face of overwhelming odds. A crisis in one's identity arises when one is unstable and unbalanced in one's self and in relation to his / her own surroundings. The Webster's Dictionary defines identity crisis as a Psychological confusion and maladjustment that arises especially in adolescents when unable to alter psychological identification because of conflicting demands and pressures: Personal anomie. An immigrant suffers such a crisis more than others. Though identity crisis can occur within the same atmosphere, immigration adds an impetus for further disintegration. This pathetic search for an identity is consciously and unconsciously experienced by an immigrant, in every progressive stage of his / her life.

Naipaul, himself a colonial with an ambiguous identity, portrays the lost, rootless, homeless and alienated individual. With an Indian ancestry, the Trinidad - born novelist found his professional roots in England. His characters are divided people; they are the people with a receding past, an anguished Caribbean presence and a dimly hopeful westernized future. Mr. Biswas, Ralph Singh, Salim and others are faced with the sense of a threatened civil order, the claustrophobia of marginality and a sense of futility. In his early works, he depicts West Indies as a closed and restricted world which provides no means for any self-fulfillment to its people. Naipaul traces in colonization the roots of futility and sterility. The cultural clash, the clash between the new and the old, past and present, tradition and modernity and the clash between an individual's aspirations and

environments, between an important island and a world of opportunities lead to the identity crisis. Unable to identify himself with the society around, an individual cannot define himself, and his place in the universe. Naipaul's protagonists seek escape in the world of illusion but are met with failure and frustration. But for them the solutions to the problem of identity is not in escape but in the acceptance of reality. In his novel *A Bend in the River* we can see how the half-organized societies and half-institutionalized terms reduce a person to a rootless and homeless creature like the West Indians, Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men* cannot find any solace or companionship in his marriage with Sandra; similarly Salim in *A Bend in the River* finds only temporary relief in his relationship with Yvette, the wife of Prof. Raymond. People whether white, black or West Indians lead fraudulent and inauthentic existence. However, there are always hints of renewal and change in Naipaul's books. He explores in his books the ways in which the conscious individual in a given society tries to meditate between himself and his experience and how he tries to establish his identity by trying to transcend the given. Naipaul also writes about the disintegrating influence of religion and myth on an individual. He conveys the experience of a transplanted Indian whose identity is surrounded by confusion.

A House for Mr. Biswas is considered as V.S. Naipaul's masterpiece. Critics find a number of strands in the novel and label its protagonist Mohun Biswas in a variety of ways. Some critics have seen it as a Dickensian novel, others as a Dostoevskian. Mohun Biswas is seen by some as an anti-hero and by others as an absurd protagonist. Despite this diversity of opinion, one thing stands out. More than anything else, *A House for Mr. Biswas* is the portrayal of a single individual's search for identity, his struggle to arrive at authentic selfhood. The novel deals with two interrelated themes, one of which is its hero's search for identity and independence in an impoverished colonial society and the other is the large-scale deracination of his community caused by colonization. In other words, Naipaul combines two themes - social and individual development in *A House for Mr. Biswas*. The individual development theme is dominant and it leads to the quest for identity. The odds are against Mr. Biswas right from the start. It is by no means an easy

struggle. Life for him has been a series of big and small disasters, each designed to underscore the fact that he was needed by no one but dependent on everyone. Mr. Biswas, in *A House for Mr. Biswas* tries to overcome the limitations imposed on him by putting up a relentless struggle against the forces that try to suppress his individuality. His struggle is a long and traumatic one but he is 68 successful in his negotiation for space and finally fulfill his dream of having a house of his own, which is a stupendous achievement for a man of his limited and mediocre circumstances. As against the heroes and antiheroes of the earlier novels, who finally rejected their society, Mr. Biswas represents the multitudes that endured and made it home. It is in a true sense the social history of the East Indians in Trinidad. *A House for Mr. Biswas* is an epic in scope and narrates the story of Mohun Biswas from birth to death. Divided into manageable sections, the story moves forward progressively and each section deals with a different phase of Biswas's life.

The words clearly suggest the necessity to establish one's self and one's identity in a society which had no male or pattern. The house becomes a symbol of order and identity. It affirms the importance of such values as independence, individuality and creativity. The house has made Biswas achieve a degree of freedom by developing an identity and continuity in the world for himself. The house is a central and dominant symbol throughout the novel. Hanuman house is not just the abode of the Tulsi clan. It had certain significance in addition to being just a residence. Hanuman house is a symbolic name. Hanuman is the monkey-God. "Those people are blood suckers, man. Rather than work for them, I would catch crab or sell coconut." ³⁹

Mr. Biswas is marginalized at an early age, almost an orphan. The experience of excessive insecurity motivates his actions throughout the novel. His life represents an engagement with a hostile fate. He is not a rebel against any social ideology. He does not break law or involve himself in anti-social practices for his personal gain. He is unfit because society demands compromise. Bonded in the institution of marriage, Biswas values subjective freedom. He remains an outsider to the society and never catches up

with social tone. Thunder and heavy rain aggravate and project his neurotic fear of being destroyed when his half-built house collapses. It is not his fault that he is born an outsider. What he is, it is evident here: In Tara's house he is respected as a Brahmin and pampered; yet as soon as the ceremony is over and he has taken his gift of money and cloth and leaves, he becomes once more only a laborer's child - father's occupation: laborer was the entry in the birth certificate.

His quest for identity continues even after his marriage:

“How often, in the years to come, at Hanuman House or in the house at Short hills or in the house in Port of Spain, living in one room, with some of his children sleeping on the next bed, and Shama, the prankster, the server of black cotton stockings, sleeping downstairs with the other children, how often did Mr, Biswas regret his weakness, his inarticulateness, that evening! How often did he try to make events appear grandeur, more planned and less absurd than they were!”⁴⁰

The novel *A Bend in the River* like several others by Naipaul is predominantly pessimistic in tone. It is also marked by something resembling Joseph Conrad's sense of the futility and corruptibility of human Endeavour. The novel may be regarded as an inspiring investigation of the price that has to be paid for change. Some small comfort is offered to the reader through the survival instincts of some of the characters. Reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *A Bend in the River* chronicles both an internal journey and a physical trek into the heart of Africa. It explores the themes of personal exile and political and individual corruption. It expresses Naipaul's skepticism about the ability of newly decolonized nations to forge independent and politically viable identities. The narrator, Salim, a Muslim Indian merchant opens a store in a sleepy small town at a bend in the river. The town's inhabitants include a Belgian priest, a witch and her son Ferdinand, and a white intellectual named Raymond and his elegant wife Yvette. The President of the new country is a demagogue called the Big man who hires Raymond as

his speech writer. Salim loses control of the store to the commercially inexperienced citizen Theo time, who hires Salim to manage it. Gradually, the town's veneer of civilization cracks and chaos and corruption reign.

A Bend in the River draws on a long article by Naipaul "A New King for Congo: Mobutu and the Nihilism of Africa" which was first published in *The New York Review of Books* in 1975. The racial and political tensions in the town at the bend in the river, a sense of going beyond the natural and the "congruent corruptions of colonizer and colonized"⁴¹ are focused through the experiences of Salim, the novel's central character and narrator, and a Muslim from an East Indian family whose people have lived for several generations in a coastal town, trading quietly. Thus, Salim is an outsider watching the proceedings of the town, with the nervousness of an outsider.

His novel is an expatriate businessman's unbiased recording of his own impressions of a modern African domain in which we find highlighted the philosophy of belonging only to oneself' as the key of the art of survival in the crisis - ridden country. Here, Salim, the protagonist-narrator, instead of lamenting his rootlessness celebrates it as a symbol of freedom and reaping its fruits. He becomes a trader in a central African town situated at a bend in the river. The town was once an Arab settlement and then built by the Europeans. It is now without Arabs or Europeans.

Salim feels that he remained detached from his surroundings from an early age; I developed the habit of looking, detaching myself from a familiar scene and trying to consider it as from a distance. But he is practical enough to realize the solution for his problem does not lie in complete isolation which moves about and beyond himself. His contact with other characters educates him and brings him closer to reality. In order to make a fresh start, Salim breaks away from his family and community when he buys Nazruddin's shop in a small town in Central Africa. He always hopes that he could make a new move whenever wanted. But, this proves to be difficult and almost impossible when things begin to happen in the form of uprisings on the coast. Though the newspaper

acclaimed these uprisings as the end of feudalism and the dawn of a new age, there is nothing new about it. Only the feeble and weak people were destroyed. Amidst this, Salim's family scatters with its family servants. As his share, Salim gets a Negro-Muslim boy, Ali, who is Metty for the local people of the town.

In this novel Naipaul has mastered "the gift of creating an aura of psychic and moral tension even as seemingly very little happens."⁴² First there is Mahesh, whose motto in life is to "carry on" through all the turmoils of the town. When Salim is worried, Mahesh expresses his philosophy: "What do you do? You live here, and you ask that? You do what we all do. You carry on."⁴³

Salim being placeless, nomadic, and disaffected and trapped in the world of problems and distress inherits the same existential dilemma as that of any modern man. In spite of his constant yearning for order and meaning, he discovers only chaos and meaninglessness not only in the external world but also within his inner self. Salim who has earlier drifted into the interior now feels compelled to immigrate to another place, to London, in a forlorn and completely dejected state. His failure to find a solid home and the futility of his quest for order and identity eliminates the last hope of resistance against the Third world and also the last civilizing traces of Western influence.

Naipaul might have called this novel "Hollow Men" if T.S. Eliot had not already used this title for one of his poems. The theme of this novel, like the theme of Eliot's poem, is corruption - corruption of the body politic and corruption of the individual human soul. This theme is emphasized by the narrator's sense of corruption of the human body in relationships where one would have been aware only of the body's pleasures. The novel takes the form of an autobiography of the chief character, Ralph Kripal Singh. It is of particular relevance to everybody belonging to a country which goes through a period of rapid political change after having achieved independence from foreign rule.

The Mimic Men is a novel wholly pessimistic. Hardly any character in the novel has any ideals or any values beyond grabbing whatever one can get for one. The only person who

reveals ideals of any kind is the narrator's father, a poor teacher; and he too breaks away from Isabella society to lead an eccentric political cum religious movement which flickers briefly until he dies of a gunshot. In this novel, Naipaul does not restrict himself to the Trinidad of the forties, the Trinidad of the earlier novels. Ralph Singh, the first person narrator, tells of his school-days in the post-war years, but the novel deals both with his experiences in London and in the contemporary world of the West Indian independence movement and the subsequent problems and conflicts.

In the very opening page of the novel Ralph Singh says "We lack order. Above all, we lack power, and we do not understand that we lack power" and later "To be born on an island like Isabella, an obscure, New World transplantation, second-hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder."⁴⁴ Ralph with such impressions in his mind about his island society came to London, the great city, 'City of miraculous light', seeking order, the flowering and extension of himself. He tries to give himself a personality. But with all the experiences and affairs in this city, he seems to be completely disillusioned regarding the sustaining powers of London, "the great city, centre of the world, in which feeling disorder, I had hoped to find the beginning order."⁴⁵

Naipaul does not portray Singh's experiences as that of a West Indian only but as that of a typical modern man who might be confronted anywhere in this world. Through Ralph Singh he depicts the man as living in constant fear of change, insignificance and alienation. Here the characters attempt to escape into an ideal, static vision of the self, to deny the continuity of life in the "Crystallization" of experience. Ralph Singh is busy in analyzing his own actions and is actually trying to achieve universality and objectivity.

In *The Mimic Men* the narrator functions as a moral consciousness which analyses, evaluates and thus adds a new dimension that had been lacking in the earlier novels. It also marks an important phase in Naipaul's career. The novel is significant for various reasons. It is perhaps the clearest expression of the themes that shape Naipaul's novels, namely, the escape of the Third World into fantasy on being poverty - stricken and

isolated on the fringes of power, the sprouting up of various political and religious movements offer a sense of drama and empty excitement finally ending up in disorder, politics dominated by appeals to race and color, the absence of real power, myths, culture or competence which have resulted in tendency to mimic, and a feeling of homelessness and identity crisis. *The Mimic Men* also seems to provide a reply to criticism which charges Naipaul with being an exponent of the metropolitan values and ideologies.

The novel is not in the form of a linear, chronological memoir because the narrator in his attempts to salvage his wrecked life imposes a deliberate order on the events and experiences of his life to reconstruct the meaning of his life. This self-imposed order endows him with a freedom from the restrictions a chronological and sequential narration might have imposed. It also enables him to muse upon his childhood experiences dispassionately and analytically with an adult mind which makes the second part of the novel all the more interesting and amusing. It would not be incorrect to say that it is in this novel that Naipaul achieves, for the first time, that rare quality, total detachment or 'non-attachment' - the mark of his maturity as a writer, and more so happens to be a critic of societies and cultures. The narrator, a disgraced colonial politician now exiled in a London suburban hotel is found recording his new impressions of London which are quite contrary to what he felt in the past, shortly after the war. In this opening part of the novel, he writes about his student days, his marriage to an English girl, Sandra, his return to Isabella, and his success in the world of business and politics.

The Mimic Men sounds like a novel of indomitable darkness at the superficial level as there is nothing positive like the comforting image of a "House" in *A House for Mr. Biswas*. The image here is of shipwreck in Ralph Singh's mind. But there seems to be a kind of hope at or deeper level which is suggested by Ralph Singh's successful ordering of his various experiences, which, to begin with, appear formless and disorderly and involves creative manipulation. Further, in Ralph Singh's awareness of his defects lies his triumph over his disorderly and chaotic experiences.

The novel as a major literary genre of society has come to mean: "a faithful attempt to recreate the social world of man's relationship with his family, with politics, with the state; it also delineates his roles within the family and other institutions, the conflicts and tensions between groups and social classes."⁴⁶

Although *The Mimic Men* is pessimistic, it possesses a dimension which, *The Suffrage of Elvira* cannot claim. *The Mimic Men* is not only about corruption but also about betrayal. Recognition of betrayal presupposes the existence of a moral consciousness and a scale of human values. Thus, the despair and pessimism contained in *The Mimic Men* do not lead to the conclusion that human beings on the island of Isabella are damned or irrelevant. In fact, the novel reveals valuable truths about such a degraded society. It is true that the narrator never displays any ideals as a practicing politician but, despite his self-indulgence, he has a moral consciousness; and in his story he attaches moral significance to what he has seen and experienced and what he himself has done or not done. The story is thus presented through the sieve of a moral consciousness which recognizes a wrong when it has been committed.

Though Naipaul writes about societies he cannot belong, he is not detached and non-committal. Though his work is a product of multi-dimensional exposure to different cultures, races and nations and societies in transition, his literary imagination transcends all limits and his themes acquire universal significance. His work presents profound and moving truths about the human situation. He propagates the need for a society which provides means of establishing identity through shared heritage. Naipaul has invited protests from the Caribbean, Africa, India and the world of Islam. At times he does appear unfair. He is, at times, too negative and agnostic. He has been criticized for his unsympathetic attitude towards The Third World countries. The subjects Naipaul has been concerned with are representative and typical of a post-colonial world. His approach is direct. In his works, man is presented in an entirely naturalistic materialistic setting and all institutions - religious, social and political are viewed with skepticism and doubt. His focus is on stunted histories, fragmented cultures and disintegrated individuals. He does

not romanticize or sentimentalize his subject. His is the authentic voice of his times endowed with a keen political sense and a sharpened perception of reality. He offers no political ideology; follows no party line. He has no solution to offer, spiritual or otherwise. He does not want to be considered a political writer. Yet he is effective in defining human problems of universal application - open to all whose identity is at odds with the society. For him and his characters, the solution to their fundamental problem is not outside them. His work is informed by a sense of human possibility and the creative activity of the mind. His art is an activity of registering a significant human experience.

5.7 SOCIETIES IN A FLUX AND NEW ORDER IS YET TO BORN

V. S. Naipaul's *The Suffrage of Elvira* presents the political dimensions of Trinidadian society in the period of the postcolonial upheaval. During this time of emerging social and political awareness after the upheaval, the East Indian society experiences the new dimensions of democracy. This novel, which is a continuation of *The Mystic Masseur*, depicts a single event of the second general election in Elvira and opens up into the broader social context of multi-racial Elvira which includes the Negro and Spanish communities as well. This novel demonstrates how the modern concept of democracy is unsuitable for a corrupt and divided colonial society in which democracy loses all meanings and becomes a medium for enhancing self interests. People had become aware of the values of their votes and kept away from the exploit of the candidates. Naipaul exposes the truth that no one owes any loyalty to the island and rarely any to his group since both the candidates as well as the electorates are swindlers. Under the influence of Capitalism people of Elvira have turned into worshipers of Mammon. Baksh becomes the Muslim leader because he is wealthy man even though he is not a good Muslim.

The novel aptly describes the cultural confusion, the breakdown of traditional values and religiosity of the rootless East Indians as well as exposes the social tension and a bickering of a heterogeneous society in Trinidad. The process of election brings out the dormant differences as well as temporary amity created by common involvement of

various groups in the election. But this forged unity is nothing more than a chaotic illusion and all the feelings of racial and religious hatred blaze suddenly when election brings all these prejudices to surface. The cultural confusion of the East Indians is clearly evident in their dresses which are more pronouncedly Western. Mrs. Baksh wears skirts instead of the traditional Muslim attire. Even Pandit Dhaniram wears dhoti only occasionally. The East Indian people except Dhaniram's invalid wife in multi-racial Elvira are also out of touch with their ancestral Hindi language. Naipaul reveals the lack of diversity in delineating the Negro characters like Preacher, Cuffy, Sebastian and Teacher Francis. Naipaul believes that the novel is a form of social enquiry that makes him to show the shortcomings of his society as well as other colonial societies. So, when Harban's car is set on fire he cries out in disgust that Elvira is a bitch and leaves Elvira.

Naipaul's next novel *Miguel Street* deals with the theme of cultural disintegration of the East Indians and demonstrates the marginal position of them in the Creole dominated Port of Spain. In this novel Naipaul is deeply involved in the colonial people's struggle for order and identity in the colonial flux of the New World. Apart from the narrator and his mother, Bhakus is the only other Indian family among the East Indian small minority groups in the street. The Bhakus maintain their distance from the Creoles who shape the majority in the street. The seventeen loosely interlinked episodes focus implicitly on the tension that exists between the two races and view the picaroon social world of the street which has no set standards for anything. The narrator sees the street as a world where everybody is quite different.

The novel *Miguel Street* remarkable for the two characteristics about the social life of the Creole Negro society; the first is the casual attitude, illegitimacy and the wildness towards women and children and second is the physical brutality of the strong towards the weak are the residual elements of the past life of slavery which became the common features of West Indies life. Most of the man and woman relationship portrayed in the novel are of a casual nature. The novel also presents the licentious nature of the Creole

society and also discards illicit relations of the men and women living on the island in the post colonial era.

This novel also employs the inadequacy of the colonial society therefore the residents of *Miguel Street* consider England and America are the only places where anything of worth is possible hence the novel ends on the note of rejection of Trinidadian life with the narrator's departure to London. Thus, admiration of America and England is the latest craze and everyone tries to imitate their mannerism in the colonial world.

V.S. Naipaul's masterpiece *A House for Mr. Biswas* portrays the quest for identity of a third generation East Indian within the colonial is land. The novel is epic in scope and a saga of the struggle of a desperate individual Indian against the flux and fluidity of colonial life under the new forces and trends which have caused a collapse not on ly of the historical past but also of the instable present in the transplanted society of Trinidad which vehemently denies it. Through the story of Mr. Biswas with all the absurdities and meaninglessness in the aftermath of imperial chaos, Naipaul disposes the problems of East Indians who are expatriates and whose past is nothing more than a dead burden on them. His struggle to establish his self identity in a hostile environment is trifled with communal pressures and the senselessness of life as the socio-cultural disintegration and rootlessness of East Indian society. Thus, the novel is a subtle and comprehensive analysis of the colonial situation. Naipaul's cultural dilemma, colonial consciousness, creative desires, interrogations and rebellions, and above all, literary aspirations are interwoven into the texture of this novel through the protagonist Mr. Biswas.

The main substance of Naipaul's next work *In a Free State* is located in Africa and is complemented and generated by means of short stories set in Washington and London. In this work Naipaul analyses the global disordered and fast changing world as well as he interprets the paradoxical nature of freedom in the postcolonial era. In this novel the journey of people symbolizes the world of flux. The novel consists of prologue and epilogue which enclose two short stories and a novella. In the prologue there are

expatriates be long from different countries like Indians, Africans, Americans, Chinese, and Germans etc. In this novel, Naipaul demonstrates that nationality for modern man in limbo remains unfixed and hence it has lost its meaning at all. He writes: "What is nationality these days? I myself, I think of myself as a citizen of the world."⁴⁷

The title story, *In a Free State*, assesses an upheaval and turmoil in an independent African country. The prominent tribes in the story are English, African, American and Indian who set the background of the novel. The ancient enmity between the different tribes because of the tribal war has become intense in the independent era and there is a combat for power and intrigues are all over the unnamed African country. This disintegrated condition of the Third World Nation in the postcolonial chaos is conveyed through the consciousness of Bobby and Linda. The educated Africans imitate blindly their white benefactors and their lack of self esteem is reflected in their English made suits and English hair style. Naipaul effectively employs the fears posed by the shift of power in post colonial Africa which leaves no one safe. Though, being whites Bobby and Linda are especially vulnerable by the president's soldier. The turmoil in the postcolonial Africa is suggested through the image of the hunting dogs that have gone wild on being forsaken by their white masters. The double face policies of the neocolonialism are disclosed through the interference of the whites in the developmental programs and internal affairs in newly independent African country.

In this novel Naipaul has failed to adopt sympathetic stance with regard to the Africans whose colonial experiences were perhaps the most brutal in the whole history of colonial violation. His tone is Eurocentric and so racial which is exhibited in analogy he suggestively draws between the wild dogs and Africans. His restrictions as a postcolonial writer lies in the fact that he makes no efforts to understand the inner working of the subaltern African society that were completely disillusioned by colonial rule. Thus, in these three novels of the second phase- *The Mimic Men*, *A Flag on the Island* and *In a Free State* Naipaul portrayed the ultimate truths of the postcolonial societies through their inability and inefficiency to digest the freedom from the colonial bandages.

The third phase of Naipaul's career is devoted to African world and the meaning of freedom in the ex-colonial world. He had spent considerable time travelling in Africa and his association with the theme of the complexities of the colonial and post colonial situations with its nuances continues even here. Naipaul's *Guerrillas* and *A Bend in the River* depict topographically the brutal political turmoil and miserable experiences of the expatriates inhabiting in the ex-colonies in the Third World Nations. These novels describe the postcolonial Third World political scenario and social condition in terms of power politics and the individuals just as political persons. Naipaul discloses the Black Power Movement of the imaginary Caribbean island in *Guerrillas* and thinks upon the dynamics of race politics in *A Bend in the River*. In these two novels politics become prominent in all the relations- emotional and sexual to such an extent that they end in violence, ennui, disgust, instability and moral condemnations in the post colonial period.

Guerrillas is the darkest but most tightly structured account of post colonial difficulties and ensuing self delusions. It has depicted the issues such as cultural judgment, the dangerous moral and political intrigues of life suspended in postcolonial space.

Naipaul illustrates the perilous politics of the postcolonial period through the perspective of the third person narrator and by moving through the consciousness of his characters. In this book he also describes the issues like the rising of Black Power, assassination of black leader, eruption of violence and the disintegration of government. The involvement of the whites of the island is criticized in the newly decolonized countries. The white people face various problems that they are no more rulers, their less need, their exploitation, their freedom seeking attitude, lost all the former glamour etc. The intricately worked out characters in this novel of the Third World establish an association with English literary tradition. For instance Jimmy borrowed the name of his commune 'Thresh Cross Grange' from Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights* and Jimmy's identification with Heath cliff emphasizes Jimmy's desire to be accepted by the white world and by white English woman in particular.

In the postcolonial society of this island everyone is a guerrilla la-privateer-fighting for his or her own cause. Jimmy, Roche, Jane and the boys at the commune are derelicts who have no sense of purpose in life. Meredith, the purely postcolonial character, being half Chinese, could not have been in tune with the aspiration of black people. Jimmy is cultural schizophrenic hence he is unable to make distinction. He is the archetypal Naipaulian mimic man and this is evident in the arrangement of his house which imitates English middle class life style that it is like being in England.

Thus, Naipaul's *Guerrillas* offers extremely dismal view of the postcolonial world where life is flux and fluid and things have fallen apart with no hope of any fresh starting. The community, the city Ridge and the entire world in *Guerrillas* are on the brink of extinction.

To Naipaul the post colonial world has no center to hold. Not only the left out colonizers but also the colonized people are at the margins of power and each community identifies the center with the other. The flux of postcolonial upheaval has made the condition of the half- made society in the Third World miserable, disintegrated and meaningless which reiterate the unpredictable and chaotic nature of politics of the second rated country in postcolonial era.

5.8 NEED OF HOUR, CULTURAL DECOLONIZATION

Language and religion are the main features of any culture and civilization. It is perhaps, not possible for the emergence of a 'universal civilization' observes Huntington, to locate a universal language or a universal religion. Language plays an important role in the society or culture. A particular language is the cultural indicator or identity of that particular culture or society. Hence, language can never be suppressed. For example, Bangladesh came into existence in the world map only because of its linguistic difference from the people of West Pakistan in spite of its people's sharing more or less the same religion. Similarly, after decolonization, the independent societies (among former

colonies) have tried to promote their indigenous languages and suppress the language(s) of the empire to assert and define their own culture and identity.

As it is difficult to formulate either a universal language or a universal religion, for the making of a universal civilization, it can be argued that no language in the world can claim the status of universality. Similarly, the dream of a universal religion is also quite unlikely since the contemporary world has seen a 'resurgence' of religions throughout the world which has involved the "intensification of religious consciousness" and the "rise of fundamentalist movements."⁴⁸ It is rightly observed by Huntington, that, resurgence of religions in the late twentieth century, took place in all major religions of the world: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zionism etc. which "involved people returning to, reinvigorating and giving new meaning to the traditional religions of their communities."⁴⁹ It is believed that, religious revivalism go hand in hand with modernism or modernization. But, the problem is that, as modernization is generally being connected to the West or the civilization of the West, it is argued that the expansion of the West has promoted both modernization and Westernization of non-Western societies.

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Islamic resurgence is, therefore, not unlike the European Renaissance or Reformation, and it has a great impact on Islamic societies. For the people who favor this resurgence, it gives a solution to the problems of the society: the problems of morality, of faith, meaning and identity. Naipaul and even other Western scholars argue that while Islamic resurgence in the countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan, is said to have given people meaning and identity since Islam is seen as a 'solution,' it cannot, however, deal with economic and political problems. The disillusionment and unrest that exist in the Islamic societies especially in the non-Arab Muslim world, Naipaul blames political Islam for its failures especially in Pakistan. While, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that Islamic revival even takes strong roots in Malaysian and Indonesian societies and quite parallel to that, they have achieved great economic progress and political stability. Pakistan, however, is an exception. The country, as mentioned before, is teemed with the problems of regional, ethnic and migrant issues and conflicts and lately with religious extremism and terrorism.

Unfortunately, terrorism has become the most challenging global issue today and it is a severe threat to the emerging civilizations of the world. With decolonization and political independence, the non-Western societies have tried to liberate them from Western dominance economically, militarily and culturally, and have shown potential both culturally and economically to compete with the West. Consequently, the universal aspirations of Western civilization, the declining relative power of the West and the increasing cultural assertiveness of other civilizations have ensured bitter and difficult relations between the West and the non-West. The rise of the non-Western societies, culturally, militarily and economically, and the relative decline of the West, have thus, posed a crucial question before the world community: how a universal civilization can be made or how a universal global consensus can be achieved to shape a harmonious future world?

Therefore, the future of both civilization and world peace, undoubtedly depend upon understanding and cooperation among all civilizations of the world. Our world is a

conglomeration of civilizations and hence, efforts should be made to ensure that no particular civilization should dominate over or encroach into other civilizations since no civilization can claim for universality in this multi-civilization world.

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