Chapter 6

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“We know that the lion is stronger than the lion-tamer, and so does the lion-tamer. The problem is that the lion does not know it.” - Terry Eagleton

6.1 Background

Most importantly, the concept of nativism and its related discourse gain prominence in the 1950s. It was, obviously, a result of the decolonization and the resistance being at its peak. However, the concept of Nativism has never gained the momentous it deserved and has never been in fashion or has not been the buzzword of a century because of two basic reasons. One is to look at the possibilities of restoring the (naive) indigenous practices in the prevalent modernity, technological advancements and growing global scenario. Similarly, the other is looking at the desirability of the societies at large of doing so.

However, to continue to trace the concept of nativism, world history, specifically, the episodes of colonialism, decolonization, postcolonialism, and neocolonization remind a story shared by Chinua Achebe in one of his works. It is a story of a leopard and a tortoise. The leopard wanted to catch the tortoise. One fine day, it got the opportunity to catch it on a solitary road. The leopard asked the tortoise to get ready to die. The tortoise requested some time so that it can mentally prepare itself for the death. The leopard agreed. It expected the tortoise to stand still and be mentally prepared. But, to its
surprise, the tortoise went into strange action on the road. It stretched its hands and feet throwing sand very furiously in all the directions. The leopard got puzzled. It asked the tortoise the reason for the strange behavior. In the reply, the tortoise explained that it was doing so because even after it would die, it wanted the passersby to note and say that that was the place where a fellow and its match struggled. Following the story, though colonized, the colonies also reacted various ways at least to let the passerby know that this is the place where they struggled. The colonies reacted, fought because they wanted independence. They wanted to preserve their society, culture and identity from extinction. They wanted the world at large to know how culturally rich heritage they had. They wanted the world to know that the knowledge shared by the imperial power was not the real knowledge about their homelands. Instead, their natives were worth places to reside at /in and love.

Thus, it is, universally, said that the issue of nativism can never be posed or discussed without tracing the issue of colonialism. The reason, as it is said, is that native cultures have been developing under the peculiar influence of colonial situation. Further, it is a matter of fact, in the postcolonial studies, that the colonizer could never satisfy or even pacify the colonized. The same has also been an issue of debate in the process of decolonization.

There are, in fact, ample evidences that there prevailed dissatisfaction on the parts of the natives and their dissents during the colonial rule. There had also been a lot of resistance and struggle against ideological and institutional domination of the West. Any movement for freedom or resistance world-wide
including nationalist movements can be a simple example of this. However, it is also a fact that different societies and cultures have reacted differently to the colonial situation.

In any case, in order to study nativism across the cultural contexts, it will be imperative to study the terms involved herein. They are: culture, indigenous, subaltern and aboriginal.

6.2 Culture, Indigenous, Subaltern and Aboriginal

In different cultures or countries, natives are addressed different ways and with different names. Somewhere there are natives, somewhere aboriginal whereas somewhere else indigenous. Hence, it would be advisable to study all the four terms first.

6.2.1 Culture

Culture is, in the simplest terms, a system of shared or common (among the members of a culture group) beliefs, ideals, values, ideologies, customs and resultant behaviors that members of a society use or are used to deal with one another or to manage cordial relations with the world at large. The same is also passed on from one generation to the following generation in the form of cultural heritage and traditions.

What, actually, binds everyone on the earth together is their culture – the ideas, customs, values, and standards they share with one another. It, primarily, conditions human mind. The word ‘culture’ has its roots in the
French word ‘culturer’ which means ‘working the soil’. Most commonly, a culture is defined as a shared pattern of belief, behavior and interaction in a society. Further, in the process of socialization, a member of a cultural group, through those common behavior patterns, gains knowledge and understanding. Further, the same shared patterns also identify members of a particular culture group distinguishing them from another one. A culture may also be influenced or affected by another one when they actually come into contact, interact or deal with. Many socio-cultural, political, geographical and anthropological factors of other culture come in to play to influence and finally, shape a culture as it is. Through a kind of socio-cultural dialogue or exchange of traditional ideas, ideologies, customs, values, ideals, and experiences and political influence or domination, and anthropological love, respect and appreciation for the other cultures, cultures change.

Hence, culture is also portrayed by all – critics, writers and sociologists as a dynamic value system. It is a value system based on some acquired and some learned elements along with customs, conventions and beliefs, and rules permitting or not-permitting its members to do something. Further, it is also considered to be pervasive, intimidating, diverse and dynamic in nature. One more quality of culture is its being subject to diffusion.

It is also strongly believed that a culture can never live or survive alone in isolation. It withers and passes away dying a premature death. Necessarily, it has to do with the qualities like ethics, morals, values, principles, esteem, and respect. The same customs and traditions, ethics and morals, values and
traditions are injected into a child along with its upbringing asking the child to do something or not to do something just because it is their tradition, custom or ritual. Thus, collective psychology of a cultural group or a society is shaped and values are attached to all sorts of acts and activities.

In the understanding of a culture, it is necessary to remember that the essence of a culture is not tangible cultural elements but the intangible ones like how the customs, values and systems are used, perceived and interpreted by the members of a cultural group.

The same is communicated to the members of other cultural group or other societies or other nations through literature. Hence, it is considered to be an expression of a culture. Apart from literature also, there are innumerable ways of knowing a culture one knows nothing about or one does not belong to. Universally, accepted easier way is to live the culture, its customs and traditions, to learn the language of the people, to get acquainted with their social and religious festivals and celebrations, to know about its religion and to appreciatively read the literature of that culture. However, at times, people are not found to be so appreciative of the other culture, its people and their traditions, customs and rituals. So, literatures also, quite same way, present the cultural differences and resultant culture clash.

Any study of literature, in that case, dealing with the differences in cultures, cross-cultural experiences of the characters portrayed therein, cultural clash or other resultant issues primarily raises before the readers two worrisome
concerns. Prime concern is to know the existing relation between the writer and the cross-cultural experience portrayed. Then, following concern is: how particularly the concerns are expressed in the work.

To systematically study the concerns, it becomes imperative that one studies the reasons behind the migration of a community from its homeland to an adopted one. Secondly, problems that arise should be studied when two different or contradictory value systems come into contact or conflict with each other. Cultural conflicts or culture clash, ultimately, leads to identity crisis and related issues in the minority community. Further, the conflict also leads to alienation and anxiety among the members of ethnic or disadvantaged groups.

It is so because every nation or state or in that case a society or a culture has one super ethnos whose members consider themselves to be the aboriginals – Native. Naturally, they desire and, if required, also demand privilege in the management and control of the affairs of the country or nation or state. In addition, socio – cultural and political discrimination always prevails. Fine tune may be sought in the adjustment to the adopted country without putting aside or forgetting inherited culture.

Thus, basically, the concept of Nativism and all the related discussions center on land and region, society and culture, and nationality and identity. It is found to be more common in those who had to migrate or who are displaced in the process of modernization and globalization.
6.2.2 Indigenous

The term indigenous is defined, by the Chambers Dictionary, as “native born; originating or produced naturally in a country, not imported.” (The Chambers Dictionary, 758)

Thus, indigenous is, in common parlance, classified (or for the sake of understanding identified) as born or produced naturally in some particular land or some particular region. It, further, refers to the native who belongs naturally to some soil or region. It also means aboriginal inhabitants or natural products of some place, country or land.

Same way, with reference to colonialism and resultant postcolonialism, indigenous people are considered to be those who have been, historically, belonging to some place or who have been a part of some community, society or culture during pre-invasion or pre-colonial period i.e before the arrival of the British on their homelands.

Because of colonialism and imperial power gain, various societies (and their native inhabitants) that developed over the years on some territories, have always considered themselves distinct or different from the settlers or their societies which prevailed there. However, unfortunately, those natives and their societies are no more than non-dominant (or in that case non-existing) sectors of the society. Hence, they are found to be worried about their land, identity, culture and ethnicity. They are, in a way, determined to preserve and
transmit their social institution, cultural heredity, (ethnic) identity and ancestral land, legal system (whatever was prevailing) with its rich history to their successive generations. All the claims and history is, actually, premised by all based on the nativity of the people residing at some place. The more original a person is, the greater his or her claim would be on the land. The same gives birth to Indigeneity.

Indigeneity, progressing further, is considered to be the quality of being indigenous. Some are, really, born with indigeneity, whereas for many others it is ethnic belonging. Those who claim it, have association with the original inhabitants i.e. natives or at least they need to associate themselves with the natives. It may be through some imaginative ways or showing similarities between the traditions of the past generations and their own existing cultural practices. At times, even after the displacement, the natives are helped by the leaders and society at large to regain their association with the land, society, culture and traditions. For example, almost all Gandhian nationalist movements aim at bringing the tribal people into the mainstream of India. He did not only initiated but also fought for it. A particular example can be the concept of Swaraj (Self-rule) or Sarvodaya movement which started somewhere in 1950s. Primarily, Sarvodaya aimed at reforming the ways of lives and social and cultural practices of the tribal people to bring them into the mainstream of the national debates and transactions. One of the leaders of the movement Sunderlal Bahuguna initiated the Chipko Movement, an off-suit environmentalist movement of the Sarvodaya movements. It started in the Tehri region of Uttar Pradesh aiming at protesting against the
commercialization of forestry through hugging the trees of the forest. Thus, with reference to the word hug, the name Chipko was given. The movement not only helped preserve the forests for the residents of the forest but also helped them preserve their land, culture and identity. In addition, the movement also led to the establishments of vary many associations of the peasants, tribal people, and women with an aim to preserving forests, nature at national level and ecology at global level. Further, the movement also morally and ethically supported the environmentalists and their movements nation-wide. It also supported people to campaign against the drive towards the establishments of heavy industry of steel and industry in the post-independence period. It brought about awareness regarding how it would lead to the displacement of forests and other related natural resources, alongside the (tribal) communities that were residing in those forests or that were associated with the forests one way or the other. Thus, the problems of indigenous people along with the environment related issues have been brought forth by the social leaders of the nation.

Both indigenous people and ethnic communities have to face the problem of forced eviction from their homelands. For one, it is displacement from their own economic and social belongings; whereas, for the other the issue has to do with dislocation and displacement from social and cultural heritage because of the immigration.

Historically, the concept or the idea of indigenous people is said to have emerged in America, Australia, and New Zealand. It was because of the direct
contrast between the Western colonizers, the rulers and the natives, the sufferers. Hence, the participants in the initial Working Group on indigenous peoples in 1985 were also predominantly from the North America and Australia. Of course, they had a few members from Central and South America. However, it is true that the postcolonial movement has been the same for all the cases (colonies), countries, the nature of the movement has not been the same for all countries and their people. Thus, indigenous community cannot be defined based on the concept of nativism or based on the nativity of the people with reference to a postcolonial country like India where it is not so much based on racism.

Major issue, as it seems, was not even the colonial rule. But, unfortunately for all colonies, basic natural desire to return to their roots, or reinstate or restore indigenous social and cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions they inhibited for centuries before the colonial invasion to their lands was suppressed and outlawed by the colonizers through their power and rule. The resistance was a result of a view or (one may say a belief) that indigenous practices are more authentic, society-oriented and hence, they were more nourishing in the cultural context than the adopted or imposed western systems, practices, and traditions.

6.2.3 Subaltern

Primarily, the term Subaltern is used in postcolonial theory. It is the last on the list of concerns after decolonization, the process of removing an imperial power over a colonized region; postcolonial, (a period, situation, scenario)
after colonization is over, or when decolonization is complete; and postcolonial studies (theory), a branch of knowledge that studies formerly colonized regions and their development after independence.

It is said that, originally, the term subaltern is used for subordinates in the military hierarchies. It is made up of two words: ‘sub’ meaning under and ‘alter’ meaning another. The term is also elaborated in the work of Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Antonio used it in a nonmilitary sense. He uses it to refer to the groups that are outside the structure of political representation.

In plain words, it refers to somebody or something of inferior status or rank, power, authority or a subordinate to somebody. However, any sort of universal definition or meaning of the term is not currently available. With reference to the philosophical and critical references and their contexts the term is in dispute till date.

Among many proponents of subaltern studies, Ranjit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have been noteworthy. Some critics, thinkers, and scholars use it in quite a general sense to refer to marginalized groups; especially of the lower class. Other theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refer to the term in an even more particular sense. For her, subaltern does not just refer to oppressed. Instead, she is of the opinion that everything or everyone that has very limited or little or no access to the cultural imperialism can be called Subaltern. However, more popularly, the term subaltern is used to refer to a group that is marginalized and oppressed and the group that is
struggling against hegemonic globalization. They are, actually, considered to be people from regions and groups outside the hegemonic power structure. Hegemony is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all, often not only through means of economic and political control but more subtly through the control of education and media.

Precisely, it can be said that the lower or colonized classes or people of those classes who have a very little access to their own ways and means of expression and are, hence, dependent upon the language and methods of the ruling class to express themselves.

Whatsoever the connotations were, somewhere in the 1970s, the term Subaltern got another meaning and it started to be used as a reference to the colonized people especially in the South-Asian sub-continent. It also gifted a novel perspective to the study of the history of colonized places or people. It was the perspective of the colonized themselves than that of the hegemonic power. Since then, it is used as a regular term in the areas of studies such as literature, history, sociology, and anthropology.

However, it is said that Subaltern Studies became an issue of hot discussions world-wide in 1990s, it emerged somewhere in 1982. A long series of journal articles was published by Oxford University Press in India. It was initiated by a group of Indian scholars who were trained in the west and who wanted to reclaim their own history. Primarily, they were writing against the Cambridge School. In their view the school upheld the colonial legacy which was purely
elite-centered. So, they broke away from that history meant for a few elites and biased with the imperial power. They focused on the history of the under classes and raised the voices that were never heard before focusing on culture, class, caste, race, religion, gender and language. Later, they came to be known as subaltern terms.

6.2.4 Aboriginal

Literally, Aboriginal is considered to be the one who is having existed in a region from the beginning. In other words, an aboriginal inhabitant of a place is considered to be inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times or from before the arrival of the colonists. Further, the term Aboriginal is quite similar to indigenous, native, primitive, original or native-born of some place. It also means autochthon.

The term aboriginal is defined, by the Chambers Dictionary, as “earliest, primitive or indigenous.” (The Chambers Dictionary, 4) Same way, aboriginalism is a movement that aims at giving due recognition to the native people; and aboriginality has to do with being aboriginal.

Aboriginals identify themselves with some nations because their parents or grandparents might have come from those nations. If they had lived in two different places, they would identify themselves with each. Apart from this, they can also be identified by their boundary or name of the state.
For example: prior to invasion of the colonial power in Australia or colonization in Australia, the first people of Australia identified themselves by their nation. Man and woman would be called as, “I am a Dharawal man” or “I am an Eora woman”. Aboriginality has hardly anything to do with the skin colour or the race. Aboriginals range from dark-skinned, broad-nosed to blonde-haired, blue-eyed people. But after the hybridity with the White people, it has become very difficult to define who the aboriginal is. From around 1910 to the 1940s, White people classified them into so many castes like a ‘full-blood’ – means a person without white blood; a ‘half-caste’ – means a person with one white parent; a ‘quadroon’ or ‘quarter-caste’ – means a person having an Aboriginal grandparent; and a ‘octoroon’ – means a person whose great-grandparent was Aboriginal. However, presently, the word has gained a racist meaning often considered to be offensive.

6. 3 Nativism in the Light of the Authors and Works Studied

As agreed by almost all theorists and critics, nativism is an urge to return to native traditions. It is nothing but asserting one’s own native culture. It, further, puts up strong resistance against the culture of the colonizers and their so called modernity. Hence, in nativist literature, it is said that, mainly, the characters root themselves to find their identity and cultural stability. It is so because a revival of native cultural forms and identities was very much essential to the anti-colonial struggle; it has, in fact, been the essence of postcolonialism.
It is strongly believed that the concept of nativism may best be explored from the empirical context of a postcolonial country. Postcolonial, in the given context, refers to a state or nation independent from the colonial rule; it also refers to the formation of new nation-states wherein economic development is dominated by growing indigenous capital. There also persist effects of colonization even in the decolonized society.

With reference to the authors and works studied, three different sorts of nativism are found. Primarily, in V S Naipaul it is longing, searching for his roots and native. It is more of spiritual than social, political, religious or socio-political-religious nativism as is evident in Achebe. Achebe does not address to any kind of quest. For him, clearly it is Nigerians versus the White; traditional Egbo customs versus the modernity brought by the British; and self - rule versus the colonial rule. While the case with Bapsi Sidhwa is altogether different. She neither talks of her personal inner void and rootlessness. Instead, she treats the issue at the societal, community and religious level. Uprootedness and ethnic anxiety of the Parsis is given due voice in Sidhwa.

It is said that any literature gets sustenance and vitalization through culture and history of the community it aspires to represent. Moreover, every ethnic community in India has its roots in its own past. That past stretches up to a minimum of thousand years during which their traditions and rituals codify their identity. Thus, any diasporic community finds it challenging to live in a non-native land with its own cultural values; their own values are not attached to that particular land, society or culture. Hence, as a way out, they try to get
solace in their imaginative return to their homeland. That is, perhaps, the reason why most of the members of the diasporic communities look back to the land of their forefathers. They look back at it as a dreamland. They have an earnest desire to go there back one day. For Parsis, their homeland i.e. Persia is already lost forever. Now there is no scope of going back to Persia and hence their pursuit for their native and roots gets a different form. They try to have shelter not in some imaginative land like other diasporic writers but in their own cultural moors. That is why it is said, “the Parsi creative writers’ anxiety to belong is not really to the place of their origin but to the culture and traditions of their own religion.” (Parsi Fiction II, 225) Most commonly, they conserve their culture through preservation of their belief system following the rituals, passing of myths and history to the next generation through folk tales and folktales, sole emphasis on community as a single unit and working for its upliftment.

In the context of the first two authors and their differing treatments to nativism, Naipaul and Achebe have responded intensely, recursively, and obsessively to the postcolonial situations as they obtained in the third world. What is common in them is the colonial past whereas what is quite different in them is that Naipaul is an expatriate writer whereas Achebe resided in his home terrain. So, one talks about homelessness, exile, and expresses his feeling of alienation and is globally in search of his home, root, native; and the other is mainly worried about the traversing of the White in his homeland. That is why, Achebe rings a tone, sets a scene, sings of customs and traditions that are purely African, whereas, Naipaul talks about almost all different
countries crossing the cultures. In addition to the colonial past, what is common in Naipaul and Achebe is the awakening. The way Naipaul gets the awakening to his roots, home and native, Achebe also gets awakened. Obi in No Longer at Ease travels towards the awakening to injustice and sense of dignity. He, actually, represents the most crucial problem of the postcolonial society. It is: disinherited from one’s own folk or traditional culture and exposed to the alien culture imbibing its values through its literature or other means, how does one come to terms with this double heritage – the native and the European?

While, in case of Sidhwa, the Parsi community does not let this situation come. They have, for years, kept themselves away, aloof from other communities and religions. Hence, the same gets reflected in An American Brat. Poor Feroza is not permitted to marry outside the caste, religion and faith. Hence, the novel meets the issue or theme of culture clash. Initially, it is in connections with settling down in America, knowing its people, their culture, values and lifestyle. Later, it moves on to a serious issue of communal bent. However, Sidhwa portrays her characters in such way that they try to preserve their identity, religion, and culture. Even though, there persists culture clash in Half a Life by Naipaul, unlike, V S Naipaul and Chinua Achebe, Sidhwa is more concerned with Parsi Ethos, customs, culture and its values.

To differentiate, among the treatments given by all the three selected writers to nativism, it can be said that Naipaul’s perspective is more of spiritual. There is
an inner void in the characters like Mr. Biswas and Willie Chandran. That is why, they crave for House and resultant identity which symbolizes their home, root, native, and identity. Without that they are living half-life.

Achebe differs from Naipaul in his treatment of or to nativism. His perspective is more of racist. In other words, it may be said to have been a social concern wherein one culture or society rejects or does not allow to settle down the other culture or society for some reasons.

Sidhwa differs from both Achebe and Naipaul in her treatment of or to nativism. She hardly talks about the other culture; there are no issues of colonialism or imperialism as there are in Achebe. Instead, she has all her praises for her culture and she tries to preserve it. In fact, the Parsi community, at large, is trying to preserve it. But, in doing so, they remain aloof from the other society, culture and their people. She treats nativism with reference to ethnic anxiety. It is so because her community suffered migration not just once but also for the second time. At present, the entire community is suffering from the fear of extinction. Hence, her attitude and approach are quite natural.

Sense of being African is quite visible in Achebe. Similarly, sense of being a Parsi is also quite prominent in Sidhwa but in Naipual there prevails a sense of belonging to no place, no culture or a sense of having no identity of one’s own.
It is also, universally, true that every community has a distinct culture. Even within that particular culture there are found to be differing and sometimes conflicting mores. On one hand, cultural diversity adds fervor, colour and variety to the world at large, but, at the same time, on the other hand, it leads to division of people into innumerable groups and subgroups with hardly anything common among them. In addition, recent migration to alien countries has been one of the resultant phenomena of globalization. Even in the past, ethnic groups have migrated from their places of birth, native or home land to other parts of the world. The feeling of uprootedness which began with biculturalism has become more acute with multiculturalism in the 21st century. The same has been taken up as an issue of the cultural difference and clash, and the problems arising out of it. However, such writings by Sidhwa or other such writers are criticized for being community –centric. However, it has been central to the writings of previous colonies that have been using it as a weapon to challenge the hegemony of the Eurocentric notions and culture. In the same context, Bharucha notes:

   Ethnicity especially is an almost pejorative term for those who think in terms of post-nationalism and the global order. Yet it is as central to the discourse of many post-colonial writers as are subversion and resistance. (*Ethnic Enclosures*, 41)

Commenting upon writing about one’s own community and people, Keki N. Daruwalla asserts:

   If you are writing fiction you will write about your people, your milieu. Shashi Deshpande will write of Konkan, Allan Sealey of Christians,
and Anantha Murthy about his own particular Brahmin community.

Each one burrows into his own cultural ghetto.” (Parsi Fiction I, 84)

Sidhwa is not an exception. Her characters are live portrayal of Parsi customs, rituals and their distinctive identity. She also presents a tendency in her novels giving voice to ethnic anxieties; which again leads to ethnocentric literature. Jaydipsinh Dodiya commenting upon the same kind of literature accepts that ethnocentric literature is produced when there is “a lot of anxiety about their community.” (Parsi English Novel, viii)

Quite the same way, Achebe wrote Things Fall Apart with an intention to bring about awareness for the defense and development of African cultural values. Describing the clash between traditional Igbo society and British imperialism, the protagonist Okonkwo is made to fall a victim to the confusion created by the colonizers and he hangs himself. We are shown how an autocratic rule of the Whiteman under the guise of democracy shattered the poor Igbo whose rules were based on open decisions taken collectively. At the end, not only Okonkwo but the entire community undergoes the colonial traumatic experience. Unlike Sidhwa and Naipaul, Achebe uses indigenous folklore. Moreover, the third person omniscient narrative also provides scope for reshaping the European prose genre into something distinctly African in both – the form and the pattern. Thus, with pure resistance at the structural level, more effective treatment is given to nativism by Achebe than the other two. Achebe, unlike the other two writers, simply challenges the muteness of the subaltern writers by juxtaposing the minority discourse against the
majority discourse. In his case or for that matter in case of the Nigeria or the entire Africa, Europe went to Africa and said that they had no culture, no civilization, no religion, and no history. To reply, almost all the African writers went back to the era of purity – before the arrival of the Britishers and they uncovered their own culture and traditions, society and customs, myths and beliefs. Thus, it is said,

Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, focuses on the conflict between Christianity and traditional beliefs and of the way colonialism creates situations that can destroy traditional societies. (*Modern African Literature Page*, 12)

To elaborate the historical incident a little, the colonial rule over Africa stirred a kind of dislike and then revolt among the natives against the colonizers. The natives considered the settlement of the white in their homeland - Igboland an encroachment of the White not merely upon their land but also in their traditional life and living. They were furiously annoyed and irritated by the enforced colonial rule and by the imposed Christian religion. The natives contemplated to bring down the European administration and decolonize their land for having their native (however primitive it was) way of life. Thus, a scenario of racial war between the natives and the outsiders is presented. In addition, there is found to be convergence between the philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi and Achebe. Gandhi gave the concept of *swaraj* or self-rule. It is, in various ways, one of the most powerful of ideas in the twentieth century about governance, both of the nation and of the self. The same is propagated by Achebe by portraying the Igbo society, its way of functioning
and the legal system. There, in the Igbo society, also prevails the principle of self-sufficiency.

V. S. Naipaul, like Achebe also presents the colonial experience. Major themes that emerge from his works studies are a sense of alienation from the land, identity crisis. Both his works are preoccupied with dispossession, homelessness, alienation, mimicry and the search for an authentic selfhood. The characters in these novels are continually in search of an identity and home. It is so because a third generation Indian in Trinidad, Naipaul was never at ease with his identity as Trinidian. Actually, in colonial societies, the crisis of identity of the colonized often seems to over-ride all other considerations. In the context of the Caribbeans (like Naipaul), this crisis takes on an even more acute form; because the basis on which identity anchors itself was completely destroyed by colonization. In particular, Naipaul deals with the East Indians’ struggle to find a foothold in the New World. He is found to be dealing with the fate of the individuals in the colonial ethos. There, actually, the pressure exerted by the colonizing culture suppressed and distorted their identity.

Indigenous population had been replaced by transplants. They consisted of African slaves, Indians, Chinese laborers and above all all imported Europeans. Thus, amidst prevailing heterogeneity a homogenous cultural identity was not possible at all in the case of Trinidadians. Therefore, it is quite natural that the displaced, uprooted from their real homes, were in search of a place in an alien land. Thus, the quest for identity in Naipaul is not like
that in Achebe: the Self versus the Other; or like Sidhwa where efforts are made to preserve the identity, culture and existence. It is instead surrender of the Self to the Other. The struggle for selfhood and the resultant half a life finally meeting with the tragic end portrays efforts for preserving self-hood. Thus, the individual self is universalized through the issue of alienation with a Naipaulian cry for identity in the postcolonial world. Moreover, Naipaul’s writing of uprooted Mr. Biswas or baffled Willie searching for roots and living half a life are his own search for his own ancestral home in India. Finally, like Achebe, Naipaul feels greatly concerned about the subordination of the Eastern culture to the Western.

Rightly, all the three Naipaul, Achebe, and Sidhwa play with the foreign tongue in order to deal with nativism and the native culture.