Chapter Four

Transnationality

Transnationality has become a new research focus in the wake of global cultural interconnectedness. It plays a key role in the domain of culture at present as man with the help of modern technology and international travelling opportunities transcends distance and stereotyped convictions and traditions. Hence, identity remains one of the most urgent topics in literary and cultural studies. It has been the focus of debate for psychoanalytics, post-structuralist and cultural materialist criticism in areas ranging from postcolonial and ethnic studies to feminism and queer theory. The question of identity has acquired greater urgency, need, and meaning in the era of globalization and transnationalism. With the rapid rise of diaspora communities, immigrants, refugees, exiles, tourists and professional travellers, their journey is marked with their quest for ‘identity’ and ‘home’. Identity structures are breaking up with the high-velocity of mobilities of the twenty-first century. This has necessitated to retheorise the traditional notions of home, nation and nationality.

The citizens of The New Age have modern notions of the self, home nation and nationality. People enter a new world of knowledge which reveals the complex patterns and zigzag concepts of identity as formulated and formatted within the contemporary socio-cultural and political realms of life. Hence, it becomes essential to rethink and
redefine these issues in the context of the postmodern developments. Identity today matters both as a theoretical concept and as a contested fact of contemporary political life. Identification is central to ‘making up people’, to use Ian Hacking’s words. In Kobena Mercer’s view, “identity has become an issue because it is in crisis” (43). The traditional assumptions about identity, a sense of coherence and integrity are problematised by global cultural changes, and are challenged by Citizens of New World Order.

Sura P. Rath points out that “conventional identity of the human body as an essentialist descriptor is questionable because surgical procedures can quickly modify one’s gender identity as organ transplant and cosmetic surgery destabilize one’s physical body. Identity today is increasingly pathologized as confluence of syndromes... and all the identities are by nature hybrid” (19). Baral tells that “attempts to decode human genetics and possibly shape the genetic make-up of future persons ... to clone human beings to xeno – transplant animal organs and so on, raise deep philosophical or ethical questions about what a person is” (115). Changing technologies also have contributed to our understanding of the problematic question of who one is.

Identity is in constant flux in the wake of massive travel and globalization. Border crossing results in collapse of borders. Under globalization, when old boundaries are getting dissolved and new boundaries are drawn, there is nothing fixed in identity. Under the new consciousness on the idea of identity, it is changeable, flexible, and also extendable. Salman Rushdie observes:
A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption: he loses his place, he enters into an alien language, and he finds himself surrounded by being whose social behaviour and codes are very unlike, and sometimes even offensive to, his own. And this is what makes migrants such important figures: because roots, language and social norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition of what it is to be a human being. The migrant, denied all three, is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human. (*Imaginary Homelands* 277-278)

Ever since Romanticism, home, country, religion and language have been recognised as the key factors defining individual identity. But Rushdie belies those ideas and tells that meaningful identities can be constructed through some other ways. As S. Robert Gnamony views, “a person’s beliefs, practices and ambitions naturally go into him/her to constitute that person’s identity” (1). Identities are never permanent. They are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed or reconstituted. Everytime, they are in the process of constitution or formation, as the people of the New Age wear numerous identities. Stuart Hall rightly puts:

.... Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply, constructed across different often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and position. They are subject to radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (4)
An identity is a construct and is context-related, because “it is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually, and collectively” (Brah 183). Hence, identity is never fixed but it is forged through associations and dialogues. According to Baral, “There is nothing that could be called an essential unique identity” (113). Thus, identity politics is problematic but it can be met and challenged through one’s own experience and ideas on identity.

Similarly, with borders and boundaries collapsing, due to mass mobility and transnational transactions and communications, new ideas of home, nation and nationality have been constituted and a new understanding of the world has emerged. The new concepts of nationhood and citizenship transcend national or cultural barriers and go beyond the frontiers. As Shveta remarks, individuals who are divorced from their “home – nations take residence elsewhere, pledging alliance, voting, consuming products and ideology in another nation-state” (103). Home is a shifting thing and is differently interpreted nowadays. Tabish Khair wonderfully questions:

And you ask, where do homes begin? Do they begin out in the street, where the brick starts leading to the gate? Do they begin at the gate? Are they the village, the town, the city? Are they entire countries, and the keys to them stamped and signed passports, or are they just that small neighbourhood? Is home a brother, a sister, a mother, a wife, a husband, a child; is home friends? Is home where you arrive or what you leave? Or can a bus be home? There are
conductors who sleep more in their buses than in their two-room houses with corrugated roofs on which a drizzle is like a waterfall. [...].

Ask me, even me, for I have known houses all my life. Big rooted homes, houses that once employed people like Wazir Main, stole them from their home, gave the gift of houses and resentment to their children, Ammi ke yehan and Ghar. I have carried these houses in my own ways, on my own far more affluent shoulders. I have found and lost, lost and found my houses too. I make my home on buses and aeroplanes, in hotels and rented apartments ....

(The Bus Stopped) 198-199

Experience and freedom has enabled one to distance oneself from fixed ideologies and concerns about homes. Homes are everywhere and one can have a home wherever one wants. In an interview with Alastair Niven Naipaul replies that “I can carry all my history in my head, all my travels, the first music I heard ... the first language I was exposed to .... And I can do all this without any stress in my mind. Nobody really lives in a single culture... people live in several worlds at the same time” (5).

Human beings are priviledged with the gift of having homes in all places as the birds in flight do. McLuhan firmly says that “Time has ceased, space has vanished. We live in a global village” (The Global Village 5). “Mediascapes”, “ideoscapes”, “financescapes”, “technoscapes” and “ethnoscapes”, as Arjun Appadurai claims, “are the building blocks for a large imagined world” (Verma Shveta 103). Such imagined,
shifting landscapes and *Imaginary Homelands*, to use Rushdie’s title, exist in one’s memory and it can be carried to anywhere.

Pico Iyer eloquently puts that “the very notion of home is foreign to me as the state of foreignness is the closest thing I know to home” (*TGS* 24). To him, home is “portable” and he carries it along with him like a travel bag on his shoulder. In a talk given by him at Yale University’s Devenport College, he spoke: “We... don’t have a home; we have a hundred homes, and we can mix and match when situation demands” (qtd.in *TGS* 3).

This chapter titled “Transnationality” discusses the emerging sense of transnationalism and transnationality among migrants and explains the necessity to abandon one’s name, title, label, identity and home to fit oneself into the ever new environment to quench one’s nostalgia. The extension of cultural frontiers and landscapes, internationalism, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism are undeniable parts of the new reality. The former spiritual quest and East-West encounters are rendered obsolete and are replaced by the search for a new identity. The theme of quest for identity and search for one’s roots have been shown to be reformulated in the present day travel literature in keeping with the demands of the changed times. The travel pieces today are embedded in the new trans-cultural, trans-continental consciousness. Consequently, the new protagonists have been shown to be cultural travellers in search of the emotional bondage rather than a physical or geographical one. The protagonists are always wandering freely in today’s borderless, frontierless
world; and their movement is “trans-continental.” (Jenefa 214) In Homi Bhabha’s terms, they are constantly “unhomed” (The Location of Culture 13).

The diasporic person is at home neither in the West nor in the East. Their constant endeavour is to forge meaningful new links with people belonging to different countries and cultures. They constitute their identities through interaction, exchanges and association with fellow human beings. The new heroes and heroines look ahead and move forward to come to terms with the complex and harsh realities of life. They are not thwarted by the onslaughts of painful realities. Instead, they take it as a challenge and withstand it. They don’t take a retreat or withdrawal as it happened in the earlier literary works. Such people construct meaningful identities against this new transnational consciousness. They participate or attend to the happenings around them; they are not escapists. The fictional figures grapple with the circumstances, however confusing or problematic.

In the surrounding gloom and despair, The New Age Writers hold out a ray of hope through their positive vision and fantastic narratives. There are numerous writers who are analysts of the new transnational consciousness in men and women. They in fact, write for the new kind of communities. One such elegant, Indian diasporic travel writer is Pico Iyer. He was born of Indian parents in England. His outstanding travel writings depict the postmodern dislocation, rootlessness and homelessness due to the large – scale rise of transnationals, global communities, global cultures and multicultural societies. His books analyse the fast spreading sense of transnationalism
and multinationalism among displaced persons. His works decipher the dream life of globalization and the onset of “transnational village”. The author catches this new sensibility in the stateless people and calls them “flexecutives” and “Global Souls” (TGS 85).

The writer himself is a multicultural person. He has described him as a “mongrel”, (TGS 24) “a global village on two legs” (n.pag.) and a “resident nowherian” from birth (TGS 23). Patrick Bethanne Kelly writes that “Pico Iyer (PEE-Coe EYE – er), a travel writer’s travel writer, does seem to have been born to the job. He is Indian and Hindu by birth ... American by profession ... and Japanese by association and he would no doubt, add other nationalities – Tibetan, Cuban, Filipino and so on so forth ... (20). Anybody might acknowledge this observation when Pico Iyer himself says with a new found enthusiasm that “My complexion [like my name] allows me to pass as a native in Cuba, or Peru, or Indonesia .... I often feel .... Indian in Cuba, or English – born in Burma, or affiliated with California in the Philippines (TGS 25).

Living in Japan with his partner, Sachiko, who is the wife of a “salary man” and mother of two children, he often calls Japan his adopted home. Yet, he realizes that he is a gaijin [outsider] in Japan [as Japanese call him] and is also an outsider person in every place he is visiting. He tells:

My complexion [like my name] allows me to pass as a native in Cuba, or Peru, or Indonesia, and none of them, in any case, is more foreign to me than the England where I don’t look like a native, the America where I’m classified as
an alien, and the India where I can’t speak a word of any of the almost two hundred languages. Enabled, I hope, to live a little bit above parochialisms, I exult in the fact that I can see everywhere with a flexible eye; the notion of home is foreign to me as the state of foreignness is the closest thing I know to home. (TGS 24)

The author doesn’t seek affiliation and claim membership or citizenship anywhere. “In my own life... a forest fire burned my house to the ground, and I found myself as far from coordinates and possessions as many of the people I had written about”, he writes (VNIK 378). Iyer has learnt to live without possessions and attachment for anything. He further tells:

A lack of affiliation may mean a lack of accountability, and of forming a sense of commitment can be hard without a sense of community. Displacement can encourage the wrong kinds of distance, and if the nationalism we see sparking up around the globe arises from too narrow and fixed a sense of loyalty, the internationalism that’s coming to birth may reflect too roaming and undefined a sense of belonging. The Global Soul may see so many sides of every question that he never settles on a firm conviction; he may grow so used to giving back a different self according to his environment that he loses sight of who he is when nobody’s around. Even the most basic questions have to be answered by him alone, and when, on the planes where he may make his home, the cabin attendant passes down the aisle with disembarkation forms, it may be difficult
for him to fill in any of the boxes: “Home Address,” “Citizenship,” “Purpose of
Visit” even “Marital status .... Where do you stand?” (TGS 25)

The author pictures the postmodern condition. He defines what home and
belonging means in a world which is changing everyday. In Naipaul’s A Way in the
World (1994), the narrator comments on the ancestry of the British immigrant
Mortician Leonard Side’s inheritance thus:

I might say that an ancestor of Leonard Side’s came from the dancing groups
of Lucknow, the lewd men who painted their faces and tried to live like women.
But that would be only a fragment of the truth. We can’t understand all the
traits we have inherited. Sometimes we can be strangers to ourselves. (A Way
in the World 39)

This observation applies to all transists. Naipaul excellently discribes the
changing world and the changing identities today. The effect is very much felt because,
as Iyer says, “the world is moving around us; it is not the individual but the globe with
which we’re interacting that seems to be in constant flux. So even the man who never
leaves home may feel that home is leaving him, as parents, children, lovers scatter
around the map, taking pieces of him wherever they go” (TGS 27). The point both
these writers desire to drive home is that our standing is “slippery,” to use Iyer’s
word, and uncertainty is the part and parcel of our life. Everytime one is losing his
hold and home as one is surronded by strangeness. The author writes:
.... the universe is increasingly shaped and coloured by the Global Soul, and the Bangadeshi who’s never moved from his village finds himself by images of Hong Kong [on-screen], and videos from Bombay, and phone calls from Toronto, perhaps, while the Torontonian who’s never left the city walks out of his grandmother’s house, only to see signs he can’t read and hear words he can’t understand, among people whose customs are strange to him. Never before in human history, I suspect, have so many been surrounded by so much that they can’t follow.” (29)

Our neighbourhood today is filled with strangers like ourselves who are thrown from everywhere.

A person may be tempted to “anchor” himself anywhere. But to uproot oneself from “a solid ground”, to use the writer’s word (TGS 28), would be an ideal decision because humans now are uprooted from their inherited homes and find shelter somewhere. With the increasing number of tourists, executives, exiles and guest workers, the modern man has to embrace homelessness as an essential condition to survive in the postmodern world. To be rooted somewhere is to lose participation and thereby to invite shocks of all kinds. To claim a fixed identity is to suffer forever. The hallmark of transnationalism is “elective identity”, to borrow Anjali Gera’s words (41). The tramp in “The Tramp at Piraeus” puts this question to others: “But what’s nationality these days? I myself, I think of myself a citizen of this world” (In a Free State 3).
Belonging is a matter of emotional bondage here like the one that Naipaul has with Jack: “I had an immense feeling for Jack, for the strength and curious delicacy of his forking – and – lifting gesture, the harmony of hand and foot”, he writes (In a Free State 31). He looks for a new way of constituting community. He is able to think beyond caste, class, colour, race and nationality barriers with those he shares his feelings. Iyer too thinks alike and desires to form a global community where he tells:

.... We steady ourselves, often, with the consoling sound of a “global village”: a village, after all, in the ancestral sense, is truer, simpler place of shared ideals, linked by a common sense of hierarchy and centre ... the village, as even Mauammar Gaddafi writes in his latest screed in favor of ancestral tribalism. *Escape from Hell*, is “peaceful, clean, and friendly, everyone knows everyone else.” (TGS 28)

The writer chooses to write the master script of his identity free of all given fixed identities. A person need not be hostile to his new environment. It is essential to turn his situation to his advantage. The transnational community he dreams is a possibility in the new global space.

The author suggests “to find new ways of living with an adulterated or chameleon sense of self, so the global order is being smoothed down into a tepid whole” (TGS 30). It would be suitable to quote Michael Ondaatje in this context. In his *The English Patient*, the English patient is not an Englishman. The soldier in the novel
defusing bombs for the British army is an Indian [Sikh] whose “honorary fathers” are Canadian, Hungarian and English. His four pivotal characters erase their names, their pasts and nationalities. They claim that they are all communal histories and communal bodies. They cohabit in a desert [a metaphor] where all their differences are dissolved and the novelist calls them “International Bastard Club”. Iyer writes in the Harper’s Magazine that Ondaatje envisions a world beyond nationalities “in which people are simply individuals of indistinguishable origins, with a hundred different cultures singing inside them” (13). Michael rejoices the dawn of a “New World Order” in his novel with a team of transnationals, who equally celebrate their multiple identities and multicultures. Pico Iyer writes:

“The world we like to think of as united, my experience suggests, looks, in fact, more and more like a group of differently colored kids all poster of Leonardo DiCaprio, while arguing about whether Titanic is an attack on capitalist hegemony or a confusion parable of self-reliance: in short, a hundred cultures divided by a common language..... (TGL 32).

The author disconnects belonging from language, birthplace, race, nationality and suggests a different form of belonging that is close to what Naipaul terms “learning a second language” (In a Free State 32). The author’s enthusiasm seems boundless when he writes:
If I were to write a fairly tale about the Global Soul, progressing through the revolving doors of empires, I might tell of a young boy who goes to the Cathedral School in Bombay, where he is trained by the British even though they had formally left his native India just as he was coming to life. Already he is an exile many times over – a Muslim, who, post-partition, ought to be in Pakistan and does not fit any of the central categories [of Hindu, Christian, Sikh] in the city where he was born [the city where Kipling was born, too, though his famous tale *Kim* tells the opposite story, of a British boy raised by Indians].

This young changeling from Windsor villas goes on to Rugby School, the most imperial of all Britain’s training grounds [where every boy, Dr. Arnold had said, will become “an Englishman – and a Christian to boot”] and afterwards, to King’s College Cambridge [as Sri Aurobindo and E.M. Foster did] and then he starts writing novels, in English, newly enlivened by all the spirits he’s brought over from his tropical birthplace, and made magical by the everyday exoticism with which he’s matter of factly grown up. An archetypal “None of the Above”, he can see the strangeness of India through an Englishman’s eyes, the strangeness of England through an Indian’s gaze; the story of how he and his country came of age at once, as “midnight’s children,” is voted the strongest “British” Novel in a quarter of a century.

The man’s freshness comes in savouring the *masala* fusions of our times ... and in celebrating the end of all the old imperial distinctions of
East and West and high and low, he speaks for many of the “translated men” in the new International Empire ... because he soars beyond all traditions and religions and lives in the space between cultures... belonging nowhere, he’s beholden to nowhere, and, settled in no faith .... (TGS 33)

The author projects his own subjectivity and hybridity into the world and emphasize on a collective commitment to reach the future destination of cosmopolitan diversity.

The writer dreams of a world where the Global Souls, like Iyer, transcend all their distinctions, divisions, categories, traditions and religions to declare that they belong nowhere and are not settled in any fixed faith and conviction. Pico Iyer witnesses the mobility of these transnationals in World’s International Airports such as Los Angeles, Heathrow, San Francisco, Kennedy Airport, Chicago’s O’ Hare, Berlin’s Templeholf and Culcutta’s Dum Dum. He is fascinated by these terminals where transnationals spend much of their time coming and going. The author interestingly says that “I intuited, even then, that the airport was the spiritual center of the double life: you get on as one person and get off as another... the airport always being a suburb of Empire”(TGS 43). To him, airports are “models of our future” (TGS 43). He remarks that life in the cities are like life in the airports. They are “home from home”, (TGS 67) to use Iyer’s words, for airports today provide all the facilities that travellers need. It’s shopping malls, the food courts and the hotels “bear the same relation to life” (TGS 43). He compares airports with cities. Like a modern city, everyone is a stranger who arrives in these transnational airports. In both spaces, according to the
author, people come to “make new lives” (TGS 44). Both cities and airports accommodate transnationals. Travellers, like people in a city, make their homes in airports during their arrival and exit. He has found many a traveller in Heathrow who spent the night there, making it home. The writer himself says “I went to live for a while in LAX” (TGS 44).

Los Angeles International Airport is to Iyer “a foreign city” (TGS 45). It has “shopping malls, food courts and hotels. Discos and dental clinics and karaoke bars ... There are peep shows and go-cart tracks and interdenominational chapels” (TGS 43). To the author, an “airport becomes an anthology of generic spaces” where town life is available without a town (TGS 44). He has found airports exciting because “they were ... a cut-rate Adventure land, Tomorrowland, and Fantasyland combined” (TGS 43). Like a modern metropolis airports are enriched with rich facilities to cater to the people who occupy this “intranational convenience zone” (TGS 43). What makes the airport special, he writes, is that “it is a gift store with culture shock: the product, in its video arcades, its hotels, and its cocktail lounges, of a mixed marriage between a border crossing and a shopping mall...where so many customers are from somewhere far away, and so many of the shopkeepers are recent arrivals with a shaky hold on English” (TGS 49-50). He was excited to see strange people there in the airports. “Around me a blond Mexican in a Caesar’s Palace hat was sprawled against an Indian swathed in Giordano and Vuitton, while a Japanese girl in a sari was pushing a lurid copy of the Bhagavad – Gita on an African. “Oh, I forgot!” , cried a woman in front of
me, addressing two very bewildered-looking Home Stay visitors. “In Japanese, yes means no!” (TGS 45-46). He was told by the volunteers there that “I could request help in more than one hundred languages, from Tajik to Pashto and Pampango to Waray-Waray” (TGS 46). The images he catches confirm the rise of a new community with entirely a new consciousness.

The people who gathered in the airports and their identities surprised Iyer. He saw a Taiwanese girl holding a copy of Mademoiselle and Japanese girls in “BORN TO BE WILD California T-shirts ... ” (TGS 51). The Japanese girls stopped “a blonde girl” and asked her, “Excuse me. Where are you from?” “Here,” she said. “But Denmark originally” (TGS 51). Like Iyer’s heroine Camilla Jensen, a Danish-born Iranian, inside her [the blonde girl] was “another country”. (AAR181). An Iranian talked to the “blonde girl” in fluent Danish, “corrected her Californian inflections, and then, in her mother’s tongue, said sadly, “Good-bye, Danish girl” (TGS 51). As soon as she walked away, he turned to him and asked, the writer tells, “Excuse me. Habla espanol? (TGS 51). The writer felt that “skins, selves, everything seems to dissolve...” (AAR289. As the writer says, the language of airports look like the language of cities.

The uniqueness of the airport is that, he writes, “no one knows where anyone is coming from... and no one really knows where anyone is at” (TGS 51). This “anonymous” and at once this “every place” startled the writer (TGS 43). One could see everybody in the world if one stays in the airports. Around the writer were many surprises. He says:
I spend one day walking around LAX with a blond Angeleno friend, and saw one Korean matron sweetly compliment her on her command of English, and another mujahedin .... ask her if she were Indian. Upstairs, where a group of students was gulping down “Dutch Chocolate” and “Japanese coffee” and translating school from English to American... a large man was nuzzling the neck of his outrageously pretty Filipina companion, and a few Brits were staring, with undistinguished skepticism, at an ad that said that seafood was “cheerfully served at your table!” .... Women dressed as nurses rattled tins, others announced, “We serve the youth in getting off drugs,” and a shady man slipped from a table to table, depositing on each one a key chain attached to a miniature globe .... (TGS 51-52)

The author takes the readers to view the shrunken world and the “transnational village” that the new spaces have become. Indeed, inside them was no country, to reverse what Iyer’s narrator John Macmillan, an Englishman and researcher on Sufism in California said of Camilla Jensen. As the author writes “terminals still speak to the anxieties rife to our borderless world, in which every kind of soul is thrown together in the Immigration line . . . offer . . . full privacy all the time – and so become the site of many of our tabloid sightings . . . ” (TGS 55). He further remarks that LAX exposes the fact that most of the people are on “foreign ground” (TGS 56), surrounded by different people values and customs. The author writes that he realized once again that the airport was teaching him about new worlds he hadn’t known ever before. He adds:
It could have been true, ... people take on strange identities in airports. And so, half – in advertently, not knowing where I was facing east or west, not knowing whether it was night or day, I slipped into that peculiar state of mind – or no – mind that belongs to the no – time, no place of the airport, that out – of – body state in which one’s not quite there, but certainly not elsewhere ... I had entered the stateless state of jet lag ... by now, like more and more of us, I’m no stranger to this no man’s land ... (TGS 59)

As the writer states, the displaced people are in a “dream state” in airports; the author here uses the state of jet lag as a metaphor to indicate the conquest of time space and direction in order to define our rootless existence and thereby to disprove rootedness and anchoring. Beholden to nowhere, and settled in no stable identity and faith, he looks around him in airports only to see “all dishelved immigrants... archetypal residents of that running in place that becomes part of the airport state of mind” (TGS 62). Even though jet lag is enjoyed by a privileged few, quick movements and “sudden jerks” (TGS 60) are being experienced by more people today, and is embraced by all. This results in, naturally, losing one’s identity and shaking one’s solid ground under our feet to make home somewhere in an unknown place”. Homing desire is a pre-condition to diasporic existence and anywhere could be a home to such stateless transnationals. Iyer aptly says:

I took to spending more and more time then, making myself at home, in front of the huge mural of Desertland, which dominates the first floor of TBIT ....
Most of the souls around me waiting for arriving planes, looked to be recent immigrants, dressed to show off their ease in their new homes, and gazing towards the some fragment of their past. (TGS 64)

Airports are homes to him which he adopted even from his childhood. The author saw in the airports the endless arrival of newcomers from Taiwan, England, the Philippines, Mexico, Australia, Spain, Germany, India and Guatemala. These transcontinental travellers are deprived of their past, history and belonging and they in no time enter into these new zones as global bodies or Global Souls. Iyer aptly puts that “airport can be vertiginous places because we have nothing to hold our identities in place there” when everyone on arrival reassembles himself or herself and constitutes a “new self” (TGS 62). The author has realized this in LAX when he was “surrounded by some multicultural children in Terminal 5 and the faces waiting to welcome us looked almost disoriented as our own” (TGS 68). Like Pico Iyer, many are thrown every “minute” into this “nowhere zone” who carry with them nothing to establish their identities (TGS 73). Thus, everybody ends there as a transnational traveller. Airports taught him to live a nomadic life, without possessions and affiliations.

When Iyer flew in to Hong Kong at the Kai Tak Airport, he was surprised by the new mob there. He calls it “a terminal of transients” (VNIK 376). The author writes that in the airport, “the expatriate life was spinning around in all its wound-up frenzy” (TGS 222). “Hong Kong is an expat city, the world’s great community of transients and refugees ... ” (TGS 224). Rootless expatriats made Hong Kong their home.
Travellers from world’s remote places — “smooth faced Thais and straw – hated Filipinos, groups of white clad Japanese honeymoonies, ruddy Australians and curry – reeking Indians” — were in motion (TGS 22). People were arriving in the airport in large numbers. The author focuses on a kind of life that was going there. In his afterword to the Vintage Edition of Video Night in Kathmandu, he writes:

The markets of Hong Kong are now to be found inside those international beings who don’t know where they come from, or to what they belong. The German man I might have watched courting a Thai girl in Video Night in Kathmandu is now the father of a half – Thai, half – German daughter who’s growing up in mongrel Los Angeles, and introducing her friends to The Ramayana and Hermann Hesse .... (TGS 377)

Hong Kong was occupied by those multicultural hearts and transnational beings. His old friend Richard is a good example. He is an international management consultant in “a global market” who takes care of his business “in the mid air” (TGS 85). He lives in the skies and makes his homes there. It was a great surprise to Iyer when Richard told him that he had to cover twenty-seven countries in a single day. There were numerous other “flexecutives”, like Richard, who are flying always to prove that they are citizens of the world.

The author gathered from a German that “The Indians here are ... like stateless people now .... They’re used to getting on everywhere. They know how to make a living out of displacement .... I too, am so cosmopolitan now, I do not care where
I live. Anywhere, it is the same: you can do business” (TGS 86). Indians, like many other nationals, have learnt to adapt easily to new circumstances to exist harmoniously with others. He recalls, “I could have been my father, in Bombay in 1937 . . . his world was made up of two cultures that he knew, while I at this moment, was between two homes [California and Japan] that were quite strange to me (TGS 90). Like the author, many displaced people today have foot in many cultures.

The author’s Chinese friend Basil whom he had met in Nepal with his “Japanese–American wife” (TGS 91) told him “we had much in common, if only because we’d both grown up with a sense of half–belonging everywhere” (TGS 92). The Filipinos who live in Hong Kong do not seem to belong anywhere. The author says: “The Filipinos who live and work in Hong Kong . . . tend to fall between many of the publicized categories in a city that conjugates all the ways one does not belong, as expat or exile or refugee or stateless person” (TGS 95). Hong Kong was a special place to the writer because “it was a rare city that had been built up almost entirely by people from abroad, and so had become a kind of Platonic Everyplace” (TGS 96). Every one in Hong Kong was from every other place. The “hybrid nest of Global Souls” pulled almost everyone there, he writes (TGS 97). One reason is that Hong Kong remains the Global Marketplace for lucrative business and good openings. Its “fusion culture,” “multiculturalism, “mingled streets” and “masala music” was fascination to the author (TGS 98). He took notice of everything in Hong Kong. He was astonished by the transformation there. He tells:
Now, as I walked behind the New World Centre — New Worlds were everywhere in Hong Kong — I saw a Chinese man kissing his short–skirted love .... A group of Sikhs was seated in a circle or the ground, enjoying a picnic amidst the debris of McDonald’s containers and old beer bottles. An African was lying flat out on the pavement, his Chinese girlfriend brushing him tenderly with her hair .... A Japanese girl who gets her British boyfriend to write on her back in French, English, Japanese, and finally, Yiddish ... the Harbour City Mall invited me to “Go around the world in one day ...” Everywhere I felt, a crush of multicultural props offering one goodies that answered every need except for the ancient, ancestral ones that convenience and speed could wish away.”

(TGS 98-99)

The author noticed the presence of multinationals who were complete hybrids. He was enthralled by their exchanges.

When the author resumed his talk with Richard, the latter was telling him that he had made “139 border crossings” in the previous year alone (TGS100). He told the writer that he would be in “thirteen countries” in the next thirteen days. “We don’t live in a normal world,” Richard said (TGS101). Pico Iyer thought that Richard could claim many homes around the world and loses his identity while he is in flight. He asks: “What is the city over the Mountains/ cracks and reforms/and bursts in the violent air/falling towns / Jerusalem Athens Amsterdam/ Vienna London/Unreal.” I could be in Toronto, in Wellington, in Sydney; I could be at home (TGS102).
The author highlights the increased movements among people because of the sudden connectedness from one corner to another corner. They have now access to “foreign homes” (*TGS*103). The *Asian Wall Street Journal* Iyer picked up to read said, “Being almost British is like being homeless” (*TGS*106). “I began to feel increasingly at home in big cities”, Iyer quotes Kazuo Ishiguro who had told him once, “perhaps because big cities have become the place where people of different backgrounds tend to congregate” (*TGS* 106). The “resident-nowherian” like Richard could develop no fixed sense of home and identity. To him, every place is his home and not home as he keeps on moving. “Richard and Sharon”, the writer tells, “I knew, were solid and inwardly rooted enough to live with any change ...” (*TGS*112). “I really don’t need to exist in real time or real place at all,” Richard told him. Hong Kong, to Iyer, is a kind of “floating International Settlement” where nearly everybody was a stranger (*TGS* 107).

When first Iyer visited Hong Kong in 1983 as part of his expedition in Asia, Hong Kong took him by surprise. Almost everybody, like him, was from other countries. A man the author met there said:

“When I came here, I really wanted to immerse myself in the Chinese community, speaking only Chinese, doing everything Chinese. And I was earning six thousand dollars U.S. and living on an island and all my friends were Chinese. But then I started moving up in the world and earning more and more and now – well, now I live in an expat world.” “Ah it’s such a comfortable life out here.
A car. Lots of rooms, a maid. It’s so hard to move back to New York.”

(VNIK 230)

As a cabbie told Iyer, In Hong Kong, “there’s lots of freedom for the new settlers (VNIK 225). This “no man’s land” was occupied by racketeers, drug dealers, gangsters, investment, bankers, professionals and businessmen (TGS 59). “Where freedom meets money — that was the location of Hong Kong,” Iyer comments (VNIK 225). Money was their religion. “This was where”, the author traces history, “the corporate cowboys came to lasso their futures, where fortune hunters flocked to pan for gold”(VNIK 225). “This is the second frontier,” and advertising executive told him. “Shoot up from the hip,” said his boss who spared him [Iyer] some time for a brief talk (VNIK 225). Thus, Hong Kong was a “promised land” and “a special economic zone for the international businessman” (VNIK 224).

Georges, his friend from Eton and Charles from the West were two other obvious examples. They enjoyed their times in Hong Kong as expats. “You know,” said Georges, “this place is really something. It is not easy to leave. Seventeen and a half percent taxes. A free flat. A Filipina amah who comes in once a week to clean the place. Expat Service, Ltd., to take care of all my maintenance ... That’s why gweilo never go home” (VNIK 222). Charles, working for Swire’s received, he tells, “a free flat, free holidays, free flights on Cathay Pacific to fly off to Bangkok. Like them, Jock, the other friend of Iyer, stayed in Bangkok. They were all expats in Hong Kong not by circumstance but by choice. The flow of transnationals, the flow money and
the flow of technology in Hong Kong excited the author. Entering Hong Kong was to him entering into “a digital future” (VNIK 228). The country’s growth amazed the author. He writes, “Money above all, was the opium of the masses: more than once in Hong Kong, I heard people acknowledge, I like money” (VNIK 229). When the author toured in Asia in 1985, every Asian country had flourished, swollen with transnationals and progressed with technology. He comments that “… in the new technoglobal village, however, convenience and communications were everything, and the world was being made generic. Everywhere could be home if everywhere was homogeneous” (VNIK 228).

Hong Kong now is “the largest metropolis” and “a large international city” in the world (VNIK 233, 235). The country had enriched its services, facilities and comforts where in this “Intercontinental age,” anybody can lead an expatriate life with no sense of belonging (VNIK 233).

When first the writer landed in Toronto he could see that the city was open to the newcomers to make “a new home,” to use Iyer’s words, “in another alien colony” (TGS 177). Indians, Chinese and other nationals with their “rainbow passports” (TGS 118) gathered near the Immigration desk. A “turbaned man” led him into dark. Hindi film music mildly floated in the air from a radio. The Sikh who welcomed the author was explaining how the community had gurdwaras in Toronto. He learned from the man that their population is on the rise in Canada. The author tells, “I can’t believe how much I feel at home here, too” (TGS 118). He was hopeful to find “a new
life” there. The woman from Australia who greeted him said, “We’re all displaced here” (TGS119). His surprise increased when the woman told him that her first name was Spanish and her last name was from Hungary though she was born in Italy. She was on her way to India then. “Australia’s” she told further, “better than it’s ever been with the recent influx of Russian cabbies and Filipina nurses and venture capitalists from Hong Kong” (TGS 119). Every modern city today is alive with the arrival of migrants from elsewhere. “The new immigrants here have made our city, too, more international, more alive . . . cosmopolitanism has made the place more tolerant,” one of Iyer’s official hosts said (TGS 119). In fact, every country is becoming more international today with the arrival of new faces from the corners of the globe. Upon arriving in Toronto, the author could notice the onset of “a new cross – cultural order” and the presence of a new kind of “global community” (TGS 120). The author writes that the American refugees to Toronto due to the Vietnam War, the Anglophile refugees from Montreal and many others from Palestine had made Canada “a vast and all-accommodating open space (TGS 121).” The city with the latest arrivals was an “anthology” to him. Iyer’s host explained that “Toronto used to be this no-man’s land for various tribes” (TGS 120). He felt that he was amidst a transnational community. The author’s curiosity increased when he collected more information about this “Global City” (TGS121). He felt an “instant kinship” (TGS 121) with this place when he recalled what he had read from an essay of Jan Morris’s about *multiculturalism* there. Canada seemed to Morris, Iyer writes, “a vast and all – accommodating open
space, “‘all things to all ethnicities’ with ‘Canadian nationality itself no more than a minor social perquisite, like a driving license or a spare pair of glasses’” (TGS121, 122). Canada accommodated a large number of South Asians, Indo-Caribbeans and Indo—African immigrants. The country was liquid with “Indian faces”, “White faces,” “West Indian boys” and “Sri Lankan girls” (TGS 129). It had embraced people from Rwanda, Bulgaria, Afghanistan and several other refugees from the early days. It admitted “Hong Kongers, Ukranians, Hongarians, Abyssinians and Barbadians,” Iyer records (TGS 161). Canada had a sizeable number of immigrants of Indian origin from African and Caribbean nations. They are descendents of Indian indenture immigrants. Seeing the coloured people there, the author writes:

For a Global Soul like me, for anyone born to several cultures – the challenge in the modern world is to find a city that speaks to as many of our homes as possible. The process of interacting with a place is a little like the rite of a cocktail party, at which, upon being introduced to a stranger, we cast about to find a name, a place, a person we might have in common: a friend is someone who can bring as many of our selves to the table as possible. (TGS 125)

Toronto, the author felt, matched his wavelength. He could assemble many of his experiences and pasts that he knew from the three cultures he assimilated — Asia, America and Europe. “Canada could put all the pieces of our lives together, it told me [and others like me], without all the king’s horses and all the king’s men” (TGS 125). The Canadian writer Guy who made his homes in Australia [his father’s place], New
Zealand [his mother’s country] and England, returned finally to Canada “where the
different empires [British, American, International] cohabited in more familiar way,
perhaps, Iyer writes” (TGS126).

The South Asian Canadian writers like Neil Bissoonadath, Cyril Dabydeen,
Ramabai Espinet, Reshad Gool, Arnold Itwaru, Ismath Khan, Herold Sonney Ladoo,
Farida Karodia, Sam Selvan, M.G. Vassanji, and immigrant writers like Anita Rau,
Badami, Himani Bannerji, Rana Bose, Saros Cowasjee, Reienzi Cruz, Lakshmi Gill,
Surjeet Kalsey, Rohinton Mistry, Bharathi Mukherjee, Suniti Namjoswi, Uma
Parameswaran, Balachandra Rajan Ajmer Rode, Suwanda Sugunasiri, and many other
writers who moved to Canada have been recognized and honoured for their
contributions to Canadian Literature. All these writers showcase the multicultural,
transnational Canada that acknowledges all its differences. The author describes Canada
as a place where “diversity creates not dissonance but a higher symphony” (TGS121).
The U.N. rated Toronto as “the most multicultural city in the world” (qtn.in TGS124).
A local columnist said, it is the “most cosmopolitan city on earth” (TGS124). The
multi – ethnic and muti – cultural Iyer considers Toronto the best example for a
multicultural city. According to him, Canada has been strengthened by its ethnicity
and diversity. He writes, “it is a city that had become more and more a magnet for
refugees who knew nothing more of it than it was a magnet for refugees” (TGS122).
Canada gives the new population the feel of a home away from home as it remains the
most “agreeable place” on earth (TGS156). The market square felt to him, he tells, as
if “I were in an Olympic Village. Head scarves and bangles and saris surrounded me, salwar kameez and tokens whose importance I couldn’t guage” (TGS129). The presence of multinationals there made him think that suddenly all places moved there at once. In L’ Amoreaux’s Market Square, African Heritage Month was observed by providing mehndi. One person was addressing on Eid – Ul – Fitr. Many teachers and students were found in red dresses in order to honour Chinese New Year. The L’ Amoreaux Collegiate had less than one hundred students. But he could hear them speak “seventy six” different languages (TGS 129). These changes in Canada transported the author. McLuhan’s “Global Village” was born in Toronto.

Toronto accommodates the mix and spends a huge amount for their rehabilitation and for sustaining their heritages. It has enacted multicultural policies. Multiculturalism as an official policy began in 1971 in Canada. Australia is the first country to enact the multicultural policy in the Western countries. Followed by Australia and Canada, other Western countries, in particular, the Netherlands and Denmark started to adopt monoculturalism. The Canadian society is often portrayed as being very flexible, progressive, diverse and multicultural. Canada accepted newcomers. The year 2001 witnessed the largest migration to Canada. The migrated people settle mostly in Toronto, Vancour and Montreal. Asian immigrants came to Canada in large numbers in 1990s and 2000s. People from Middle East, South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia made their residence in Canada. The people in Canada, the author noticed, were highly tolerant and accommodative. The new gathering in
Toronto reminded him that it was “a mosaic” (*TGS* 124). “Here is a peace country for all the world,” said an Iranian to Iyer in Canada (*TGS* 134).

The author also traces the transnational and multicultural sensibility in the contemporary writers who settled in Canada from elsewhere. Many writers celebrate their mixed realities and ethnic backgrounds. Shyam Selvadurai, a Sri Lankan writer in Canada could write about gay life in Colombo. The author writes that in Anne Michael’s *Fugitive Pieces*, Toronto is “an active port,” — a New World Athens, in which “almost everyone is from somewhere... bringing with them their different ways of dying and marrying, their kitchens and songs ...” (*TGS* 140). The Canadian – based novelist Michael Ondaatje in his *Running in the Family* looks back to his Sri Lankan origins. The author deliberately uses the country’s name as ‘Ceylon’ even though its name was changed in 1972. The protagonist in his map looks for the possible routes to ‘Ceylon’. But he fails in his attempt and couldn’t locate the name on the map. To his surprise, the land he desires to return, does not exist there. ‘Ceylon’ has always been an “unstable geography,” to use David Punter’s words (*Post Colonial Imaginings* 40). The novelist ostensibly puts:

> On my brothers wall in Toronto are false maps. Old portraits of Ceylon. The results of sightings, glances from trading vessels, the theories of sextant. The shapes differ so much, they seem to be translations — by Ptolemy, Mercator, Francois, Valenty, Mortier, and Heydt — growing from mythics shapes into eventual accuracy. (*Running in the Family* 63)
In the postnational globe, as David Punter views, “names change, as we see, do change, change under the irresistible impress of naming by the other, naming as the other; just as shapes change, maps change; this too is an inevitable part of postcolonial narrative” (Running in the Family 42). The novelist projects his self and erases his past, history and the very name. In The English Patient, all the main characters escape their names, their pasts and their nationalities to live without attachments and to challenge the whole nation of a location. While Iyer reviewed Leave It To Me, he writes:

In Bharathi Mukherjee’s Leave It To Me is a character called “Devi” now and who, in search of her mother, finds that her forebear carried six passports at least; this child of Eurasian parents learns about the mysterious East from a Chinese Lover in San Francisco. She listens to “Norwegian Wood” sung in Punjabi and eats French – Korean food.... (TGS 22)

The book shows the “masala fusions” of the changing time (TGS 32). The postmodern world is completely hybrid and its occupants are transnationals and hybrids. In the Tropical Classical Iyer writes:

Michael Ondaatje, in his prize – winning The English Patient, takes us to a ruined villa in a Tuscan hill town ... and fills the classic spaces with the names of distance places — “Ain, Bir, Wadi, Foggra, Khottara, Shaduf.” Here where, the Renaissance legacy of northern Europe meets the Iyric breezes of the south,
he brings together wanderers from North Africa, India, and “Upper America,” in a world in which nationality is irrelevant (qtn.in TC 126).

As Ondaatje says, man becomes nationless gradually. The hero in Richard Rodriguez’s *Days of Obligation* is the son of Mexican parents. He claims that he is “Indian”, “an Irish Catholic,” “an American” in this continuously shifting landscape. Triniton, “an English boy, in Romesh Gunesekera’s *Reef* prepares *seenisambol*, *pol-sambal* and *pol – kiri – badun curry* and serves them to his English master Mister Salgado. His master consumes ‘soft – boiled eggs” and “plantain” for his breakfast, and “coconut cake” and “cucumber sandwiches” for tea. The novelist pictures Sri Lanka, the island in transition. In Yaan Martel’s *The Life of Pi*, the main character is an Indian youth who believes in Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. He depicts the “mosaic” culture (*TGS* 124) and the contemporary multicultural Canada. In *S,M,L,XL*, Ram Koolhaas’ dreams of a new world with cities built like malls. Such writers bridge many worlds and bring together many coloured souls and the changing societies around different people in which everything is strange and foreign to recognize. Many writers in Canada creates a borderless world with the transnational society. The author points out that Canada is also home for New literatures. Canada was completely international. “The name Toronto ... means a ‘meeting place’ (*TGS* 120). It is the land of transnationals, and the transnational community there take pride in their commonness and unity.

In the chapter on “The Games” Iyer explores Atlanta’s Olympic Village, which seemed to represent to him universalism. According to the writer, the Olympic Games
stands for “global harmony” (*TGS* 175). “The Games do provide as compact and protected a model of our dreams of unity as exists, with hopeful young champions from around the globe coming together in an Olympic Village that is a version of what our global village could be, to lay their talents on the altar of “friendly competition...” (*TGS*175). The olympic Village reminded him of the “One World Order”.

In his essay titled “Coming in from the Cold”, the writer begins that: “Suddenly the confrontation’s over. The two great rivals of the postwar era — America and the Soviet Union — are more or less friends. East and West Germany are one. Even North Korea have signed a treaty of reconciliation ... But in a world where even South Africa is again part of the Olympic family...” (*TGS* 68). He sees that the international players from the rival countries are united under the five Olympic Rings. The Olympic Village with its presence of émigré linguists, multinationals and the millions of Olympic visitors from almost everywhere resembled to him “a parallel universe” (182). Global harmony and unity existed there. He writes:

... The Games begin with the forces of 197 nations marching out behind flags, strictly segregated and almost military in their color – coordinated uniforms; they conclude, just two weeks later, with all the competitors spilling out onto a central lawn, till you can’t tell one team from another. The colors run . . . the Games unveil a more human and vulnerable side to international relation, which helps to correct, and sometimes to redeem, the grander shows of global unity ...

(*TGS* 177).
To the writer, the place stands to symbolise global harmony and cosmopolitanism with the gathering of the multicoloured crowds and competitors. The Game seemed to unite all and they brush aside their enmity and differences. Arriving at Atlanta for the 1996 Olympics, he soon discovers that the city has made itself a global centre for communications, conventions and aviation. When Dave interviewed the author, he said “What is interesting to me about Atlanta is that ... It’s the home of CNN, Coca-Cola, Delta, and Holiday Inn ...” (7) The author focuses on the city’s, sudden connectedness to the outside world. The Olympic Village, “a utopian global campus” had religious centres, hair saloons, night clubs, theatres and daily newspaper. The main press centre and the International Broadcasting centre were multistory buildings (TGS 177). “Global ATMS” (TGS 181) served the new community there. “global screens” (TGS 179) were showing all the competitions that were conducted in twenty–six different venues. “And I, for three weeks every two years, move through a parallel universe that looks like a sleeker on-screen version of our global future (TGS 182), the author notes down. The crowd there and their sociability fascinated him. The twenty–four–hour McDonald’s there had huge television sets. The Media Transport Mall Shuttle buses had TVs on all the “thirty buses” to broadcast the events. The computers in the arrivals lounge in the Olympic City said, “the world was a big global market” (TGS 184). “And every time I prepare to attend an Olympic Games, I feel as if I’m entering a foreign country [albeit a migrant one founded on the principles of transnationlism]” (TGS180). Zaleki Jeff and Gediman Paul view that “Many of
these locales are at once Everyplace and No place” (69), and Iyer deftly captures the rootlessness of those who live there. The author points out the fact that we lack rootedness because of the increasing displacement and flux.

The national park in the area around Martin Luther King’s birthplace was visited by tourists from Florida, Carolinas and the Ivory coast. The author registers his wonder seeing a huge portrait of Gandhi that occupied the entrance in Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Non-violent Social Change, Martin Luther King Church and the Martin Luther King Chapel of Love in Atlanta announced Atlanta’s tolerance and the changed state of mind. In 1956, he quotes, Fortune declared Auburn Avenue as “the richest Negro street in the World” (TGS 188). According to the Peach State Black Tourist Association, “African American Panoramic Experience was the planet’s greatest show on African American hope and heritage” (qtn.in TGS189). The author tells, “I thought the King would have been touched to see how much the world had moved towards a sense of global brotherhood...” (TGS188). Atlanta valued international relations and brotherhood. The writer’s dream life came true when he saw “South Koreans cheer on North Korean Skaters and . . . teenagers cross every language barrier just by giggling at the Olympics”(TGS195). He interacted with many hyphenated beings on the streets of Atlanta.

The huge gathering in Atlanta made him think that affiliation to a nation – state was not an ideal state of mind. The Olympics produced “mass images of nationalism and universalism” (TGS176). The fanciful crowd over there applauded the patriotism
of every other person and the boundaries between them disappeared and dissolved. The author, seeing the fans there, thought that “how difficult it is for the rootless to root for anyone, and reluctant to ally myself with a Britain, an India or an America that I don’t think of as home, generally end up cheering the majestically talented Cubans or the perennial good sportmen from Japan” (TGS176). The author expresses that he could not identify himself with his ancestor’s India or his adopted homes such as Britain, America and Japan.

The Olympics seemed to interpret globalism and universalism. Atlanta seemed an ideal place to experiment the future of the new “global world” and “global culture” when it took out “the Parade of Nations” (TGS195). The author noticed some signs that said, “The world in which we live is geographically one.” One sign said in the street, “Now we are challenged to make it spiritually one. We’ve made of the world a neighborhood. Now we must make it a brotherhood (TGS190). The Olympic Games in every aspect symbolise global unity. “The Olympic song is written by Andrew Llyod, Webber and Celine Dion and Jose Carreras in three languages” (TGS 192). The International Olympic Committee was constituted with 115 members from various nations was to him like “one of the last great empires on earth”(TGS178). The Olympic Rings are “the most recognized symbol in the world.” The organizers proudly said, the author notes down, “The Olympic Movement” is more powerful than the UN” in the sense that the International Olympic Committee has “more member states” than the United Nations (TGS 179). Their allies with each other confirmed the growing
international associations and relations between nation-states. “The World Is Welcome
Here is the copyrighted property of the IOC” (TGS179). Thus, at the Olympic Games,

differences fade away.

The writer was excited to see the “global players” and the global men who
transcend their borders, boundaries and frontiers to arrive in Atlanta to join the new
gathering of transnationals. The author writes, “The Olympics provide an almost unique
opportunity to address the whole of humanity at once . . . Atlanta, in 1996, was keen to

present itself as the “Next Great International City” (TGS 183). Atlanta’s ‘recent’
mayors, Iyer notes, were African – American. The place had demolished its old
buildings and had built spectacular towers where it accommodated the once isolated
blacks, and they proudly called itself “the phoenix of the South” (TGS184).

Upon arrival in Atlanta the author was impressed by the preparations for the
“nation’s meeting with the world” (TGS 177). “Walking through Hartfield felt a little
like walking through a curriculum vitae; this was the “world’s fastest growing airport”,
the writer enthral (TGS 179). He was told that the terminal was “home” to many
passengers from abroad. He gathered that Atlanta turned to be “the fastest spreading
human settlement in history” (TGS184). The names of the stores such as Home Depot.,
Home Palace, Computer City, and the cosmetic centre sounded strange to the author.
Malls, minimalls, strip clubs, and shopping malls sprouted up there. “I felt as if I had
landed up in a city by Marriott, a place that was global . . .”, the writer astonishes
(TGS186). This Week Atlanta he read had a review of a strip club that read: “This
architectural landmark serves as a shrine to adult entertainment” (TGS 187). One entertainment centre said: “MORE THAN JUST ADULT ENTERTAINMENT ... A CLUB WITH VISION” (TGS 187). The Host Inns and Dial Inns had the signs GLOBAL BURGERS. The writer pictures the transformations in Atlanta due to the flow of new global policies in the wake of globalization.

Atlanta was turning to be the centre for business as it enjoyed a “global reach” (TGS 195). The city was globally linked. The writer collected that 195 countries got their soft drinks from Atlanta. Many countries had their head – quarters in Atlanta “than in any other American city” (TGS 214). There were more than three hundred Japanese companies – head quartered in Atlanta. It boasted with the all the titles – “the largest cable – supported dome in the world,” “the second – largest convention center in the U.S.” “the world’s largest granite outcropping,” “the largest black – powder cannon ball still found in the United States,” “the largest urban park built since the war”, “home to Coca – Cola, – the world’s most famous trademark”. Atlanta was centre for CNN — “the largest news – gathering organization in the world,” “the largest hotel chain both in name and reality in the world,” being the headquarters of Holiday Inn, and “the largest gay population in the U.S. (TGS 198, 214). The world seemed to be there in Atlanta.

The chapter on “The Games” thus, is Iyer’s observations on the Atlanta Olympics and the city itself. As the author points out, Atlanta hosted “millions of visitors” from everywhere. The coloured crowd over there transcended its patriotism and cohabited
for two weeks. They threw aside their race, nation and nationalities. The fans cheered jointly over everybody’s victory. More than fifty thousand transnational volunteers picked up from various countries served sincerely as if Atlanta was their own country.

In Atlanta, the whole world seemed to march forward together to create one single world. The slogans for global brotherhood and unity delighted the author. The game exhibited the interconnectedness of the human race. The Olympics, according to the author, seemed to define unity and brotherhood. The visitors rised above from fixed categories and mingled with all in the new world where everybody was from somewhere. All the worlds were there in Atlanta; their differences disappeared.

Though the author dedicated half of its pages in the chapter to show the conquest of Coco-Cola, McDonald’s, Burger joints, shopping malls, CNN and the multinational companies based in Atlanta, his grand theme in mind was to explore how the mankind is globally linked and connected through these new forces from which today’s humans can’t at all delink himself or herself. Atlanta, “the would-be global city and the global village”, to borrow Iyer’s words, interpreted the fast spreading sense of transnationlism worldwide (TGS 215).

The chaper on “The Empire” reflects that the Empire has ceased to exist as the imperial Britain. It had began to master the ways of the “Global World” by accepting things foreign. According to the British Tourist Association, “the national dish of Britain is now curry . . . and the most popular flavor ordered from the Domino’s pizza chain in the UK in 1994 was tandoori chicken”(qtd.in TGS 239), the author notes
down. He learned from his Indian friend in England that more people like him could be easily found in Britain. A lot of outsiders had made their residence in the country. The author further points out that “The Earls you meet these days in London are from Trinidad, and ... there are more Indian restaurants in Greater London than in Bombay and Delhi combined” (TGS 239). The writer adds:

En route from Bombay to L.A., I happened to stop off for three days in London. There I found West Indian Sitcoms crowding the airwaves and samosas filling the sandwich bars. Culturally, the talk of the town was a new movie written by a twenty–nine–year–old Pakistani, My Beautiful Laundrette. The film had shocked English audiences with its unblinking portrayal of an alliance between a soft–faced Pakistani boy and his skinhead neo–Fascist Chum. More startling to me, however, was the deeper social conquest it revealed; in Laundrette, every white is on the dole, and every black on the rise ... it is the Pakistanis who hire unemployed Englishmen, the Pakistanis who command white mistresses ...

(VNIK 358 - 59)

The writer in his book The Global Soul mentions that “The white-bread area are full of samosas” (TGS 119). He gives a very clear picture of the contemporary Britain where the erstwhile colonized people take the upper hand to dictate their former master who is captive now to the whirlwind of cultural changes. Princess Dians’s affair with the Pakistani doctor and Jamima Goldsmith, who married the former Captain of the Pakistani Cricket Team are the obvious examples to show the exchanges
happening among enemy countries. The author makes a mention of a Cricket match that was played between England and West Indies once. England could defeat the West Indies after many years. The reason was that “nine of its thirteen players came from the colonies —from Australia, the subcontinent, and in fact, the Caribbean . . . (TGS 242). The IPL 20-20 matches which are hosted by the Indian Cricket Board is the fashion of the day. “Coloured players” in every Indian team redefine the very notion of nation and identity. The players forget their nations and their identities hang on in the air. Trends are constantly changing and man is entering into a new “Global Age” (TGS 247).

In London, the cabs had ads for Fujitsu and Burger King and the hoardings advertised for Afro-Caribbean hair treatments. His little hotel had provided a special box for “Arab Gown” [for laundry services]. In the Yellow Pages, St. Bede’s Church advertised itself as a “Temple of Fitness”. The author writes, ... in fact, like America, England seemed to have been invigorated by its visitors from abroad, and it never seemed a coincidence to me that many of Britan’s proudest new traditions — The Globe Theatre, Granta, British Airways, and the modernized Oxford Colleges — had been rescued by energetic ‘Yanks’” (TGS 248). The author shows the new developments felt by Britain due to the arrival of the transnationals there. To him, England looked “more American, more European, more Asian” (TGS 248). The result was that they had varieties of food to eat, the culture became “livelier” and their conflicts came to an end, because of mix and minglings, the writer felt.
V.S. Naipaul in his *Enigma of Arrival* foretells that the place he landed up would become thick with Australians, a South Africans, and White people. He dreamt of a metropolitan city that would embrace exiles like himself. Britain had transformed much. Indian students could join “Harvard Business School or San Jose or Sydney or Toronto” (*TGS* 252-53). Romesh Gunesekera’s charaters, as Iyer says, “can go everywhere now ... and have access to everyone” (*TGS* 253). The author points out that Britain is open to all where distinctions disappeared and restrictions were not imposed. As the author rightly says, being ‘ethnic’ or an exile is really a blessing because he has nothing to cling on or nothing to hold on as he is floating always. The author himself felt:

“I came from nowhere .... I had no tradition to protect .... I was more prone to floating dispassion; and instead of ... fierce sense of right and wrong, I had a more unanchored, relativistic sense ... I’d never had a strong sense of departures [arrivals]; I’d grown up without a sense of a place to come to or from which to leave .... I figured, could [for worse as much as better] fit in everywhere ... everywhere could be home to some extent and not home to some degree ... I knew I could get anywhere very soon, and nothing was final. (258-59)

To a transnational or a Global Soul like Iyer, the notions of affiliation are, in Iyer’s words, “hazy”. To him, “not to be at home in one’s own home,” as he quotes Adorno’s saying, is the ideal state of mind (*TGS* 258). He feels that he is advantaged more by being a floating being in the world of permanent flux. The borders of identity
collapse with the migling of cultures, and as Cisneros explains, “What I’m saying in
my writing is that we can be a Latino and still be American” (Godayol 67). Identity is
becoming increasingly elusive as worlds cross with an individual. The author heard a
young Englishman saying, “Eleven years ago, I became a Muslim. Before, I was a
Christian; now ... my name is an Arabic name... (TGS 262). The writer remarks that
there is no such thing as fixed or stable identity when rootless transnationls carry with
them mobile homes.

The writer in his essay on “The Alien Home” reveals more about him when he
experiments his definitions of home, nationality and the self. The very title is
suggestive of the point the writer wants his readers to collect and take back home to
think and rethink about one’s place and position in this mobile world. He begins:

And so our dreams of distant places change as fast as images on MTV, and the
immigrants arrive at the land that means freedom to him only to find that it’s
already been recast by other hands. Some of the places around us look as
anonymous as airport lounges, some as strange as our living room suddenly
flooded with foreign objects. The only home that any Global Soul can find
these days is, it seems, in the midst of the alien and the indecipherable.

(TGS 269)

Like the writer, many people today uproot themselves from the countries of their
birth and take shelter somewhere in foreign places where they, like others, are
outsiders, and claim membership in the alien society. The author discerns:
.... on a distant island where I can’t read any of the signs and will never be accepted as even a partial native. Specially, I live in a two – room apartment in the middle of rural Japan. In the modern mock – Californian suburb none of his buildings are older than I am, with a longtime love whose English is as limited as my Japanese, and her two children, who have been fewer words in common with me ... long weeks go by without speaking my native tongue. (TGS 269)

The state and position of the writer is that of a wanderer. Wanderers have nothing in common to share in the places they arrive at. He is sure that “Japan will never be entirely my home, of course, and Japan would never really want me to come any closer than I am right now. It assigns me a role when I enter ... and asks me to go about my business, and let it go about its own ...” (TGS 273). The writer has no thirst to get anchored in Japan. He desires to live like a gaijin there. He finds himself comfortable in his “alien home”. He considers it a blessing to live in so alien a place as he is “reminded of how little I belong here ....” (TGS 275). In fact, the writer likes this state and is happy to live among strangers.

The writer as an itinerant points out that everybody has to embrace the foreignness around every one of us. Japan is more foreign to him and he realizes that he doesn’t belong there. He aptly puts:
Japan will never be entirely my home .... I am reminded of how little I belong here – how alien I am to Japan’s image of itself – each time I return to the place I like to treat as home. At the Immigration desk, the authorities generally scrutinize my passport with a discernible sense of alarm; a foreigner who neither lives nor works here, yet seems to spend most of his time here; an alien who’s clearly of Asian ancestry, yet brandishes a British passport, a postmodern riddle who seems to fit into none of the approved categories. (TGS 275)

In fact, Iyer is “a postmodern riddle” who defies all labels and all categories, and is capable of jumping across boundaries and borders and go beyond fixed identities just with a single phrase when he declares that “I’m a Global Soul, a full-time citizen of nowhere ... (TGS 277). He claims home[s] everywhere and home[s] nowhere; prefers to live like a mobile citizen in the newly mobile world. He inverts Robert Frost and views that “home is place where, when you have to go there, they don’t have to take you in” (TGS 278). Japan, to him, is one such place which is “more alien than anywhere I know,” he writes (TGS 275). He surprises the readers by telling that “Living far from anywhere, without a bicycle or private car, I conduct my days ... living without newspapers or magazines – and a television most of whose words are modern Greek to me ... And not knowing much of the local tongue frees me from gossip and chatter and eavesdropping, leaving me in a more exacting silence” (TGS 287). Amidst totally an alien environment, the writer is able to feel at home complaining about
nothing. According to him, only peace can find one a home. It is apt to quote him: “a sense of home can emerge only from within . . . ” (TGS 282). A inward journey has always fascinated him through-out all his wanderings and has learnt to share homes wherever he moves. To quote him, he says “... in our modern world ... more and more of us find ourselves sharing homes with our own private Japans. Half strange and half strangely familiar” (TGS 296). Strangeness and foreignness is home to the author.

The writer observes that the world today is greatly advantaged by the birth of the global village because it has offered opportunities to travel among the foreign so as to realize where one actually belongs in the topsy – turvy world. The author aptly notes that he is more comfortable in Japan. Leaving home he feels that he can be at home somewhere with few possessions. He adds that “In Japan, with few belongings, no space, and not much savior faire, I’m carried back to that state of quick enjoyment, where phone calls are so occasional that they’re actually welcome and every movie, seen once a month perhaps, seems special” (TGS 289).

The homeless presence suddenly disappears to him as and when he begins to dwell with the minimum, sometimes with far below than that, facilities and services. That is why “Some Lonely Places of the World” he visited such as North Korea, Argentina, Cuba, Iceland, Bhutan, Vietnam, Paraguay and Australia are exotic locales and perfect places to him “in which to think about loneliness and space” (FOTM ix). A T-shirt he noticed in California said: I DISLIKE HOME WHEN I’M ABROAD (TGS 295). Such spaces, when one crosses borders compels one to dissolve one’s
identities and erase nationalities to embrace a new identity. The idea of home that Iyer has sounds strange. He wonderfully puts:

“That this is my home ... I can tell when the trees in the park are going to change color, and when the vending machines will change their offering from hot to iced. I know my girlfriend will bring out the winter futons from the cupboard, and when her daughter will change her school uniform from white to blue ... (TGS 296). To invert Shakespeare, home is in the eye of the beholder. Everybody has different definitions about what home is all about. The writer sums up that “there is nothing to anchor us” as our hold is shaky, and our being here is pre-programmed to be in constant motion and perpetual flux. As Iyer tells, when the “world contracts and isolation fades ... there will never be ... lonely people.” (FOTM 9)

*The Global Soul*, is an optimistic text in which Iyer explores the transcultural spaces to challenge the old definitions of culture, home, nation, nationality and subjectivity and disproves the age-old concepts relating to these issues. The author visits the venues such as international airports [Heathrow, Kennedy Airport, Chicago’s O’ Hare, LAX, Tom Bradley International Terminal, Osaka’s Kansai International Airport, Hong Kong’s Kai Tak Airport and Dum Dum in Calcutta], Global Marketplace like Hong Kong, the multicultural city like Canda, shopping malls and Atlanta’s Olympic Village, where transnational subjects congregate, mix and mingle. The writer claims that “... In Torento, in Hong Kong, even in the Olympic Village nowadays, I seem to see
as many as couples dissolving nationalities, other kinds of distinctions and so bringing
to light unimaginable new cultures in which the annihilation of traditional identity is
turned to something higher” (TGS 293). To him, these global zones have become new
homes for the people in perpetual motion. He argues that these new sites have become
models of our ‘global future’ and ‘global culture’. Iyer, in this book, develops his
views about the universal nature of hybridity and placelessness due to the emergence
of hybrid societies and global communities.

In the “mongrel, mixed – up world,” to borrow Iyer’s catchy words, no one can
live with a single identity and home. Homes people inherited are now replaced with
chosen homes which they pick up or choose every now and then. A more flexible and
extendable sense of identity and home has emerged, in the writer’s words, with “porous
borders” and trasnational flow of cultures, customs and practices in the transcultural
sites. Hence the notions about one’s home and identity have undergone severe scrutiny.
Rich and insightful impressions have been drawn by the analysts of the postmodern
world with regard to the condition of the contemporary men. Living in the newly
birthed world the men of the New World have to constantly reassemble themselves to
fit in everywhere.

In his exploration in search of hybrid people, hybrid cultures and hybrid
identities, he catches the growing sense of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism
among those subjects who are always on the transit mode. He views that
transnationalism is the new form of nationalism and this nationalistic desire is towards
every nation today. The writer observes that transnationalism allows one to dismiss one’s past and transcend national or cultural barriers that results in constructing a new meaning of citizenship and belonging. The New Age people accept transnational identities and challenge the conventional ideas of a singular, pure, unadulterated and fixed identity. These “transitional beings”, to borrow Victor Turner’s phrase, forge multiple, hyphenated and hybrid identities to occupy this open, diverse and multicultural world. They transcend their cultural, generational and linguistic differences to achieve an identity that connects the West and the East and vice versa. With the steady rise of transnationals worldwide, the new cosmopolitan community embrace a ‘transnational’ identity and is realized as an undeniable new reality. Iyer claims that it is possible to escape the struggles of identity politics, racism, crime, violence, immigration, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender and all the present difficulties, as long as people continue to sail along the path of modernisation and Westernization.

The author offers a solution to end up difficulties and struggles to reach future destination of a heterogeneous world.

The writer has excellently planned this book. He begins the story of migration, displacement and homelessness with a chapter on “The Burning House” in which he gives an account of a huge flame that destroyed his house in California and left him homeless and a homeless person forever. He ends the book with a chapter on “The Alien Home”. This at once becomes a handy metaphor to depict the condition of the contemporary men. When everybody is a homeless person today, the visible slice of a land will never become one’s home or homeland.