Chapter IV

Ambivalence in The Mystic Masseur

Ambivalence is one of the prominent features in postcolonial works and a recurrent theme among the diasporic writers. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines the term as ‘having mixed feelings or contradictory ideas about something or someone’. Ashcroft, Bill et.al.in their book Post Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts states that the term ambivalence was first developed in psychoanalysis to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It also refers to a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action (Young 161).

Adapted into colonial discourse theory by Homi Bhabha, it describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer. Rather than assuming that some colonized subjects are ‘complicit’ and some ‘resistant’, ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject.

Ambivalence also characterizes the way in which colonial discourse relates to the colonized subject, for it may be both exploitative and nurturing, or represent itself as nurturing, at the same time. Most importantly in Bhabha’s theory, however, ambivalence disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between colonizers and colonized. Ambivalence is therefore an unwelcome aspect of colonial discourse for the colonizer. The problem for colonial
discourse is that it wants to produce compliant subjects who reproduce its assumptions, habits and values – that is, ‘mimic’ the colonizer, instead it produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never very far from mockery. Ambivalence describes this fluctuating relationship between mimicry and mockery, an ambivalence that is fundamentally unsettling to colonial dominance. In this respect, it is not necessarily disempowering for the colonial subject; but rather can be seen to be ambivalent or ‘two-powered’. The effect of this ambivalence, the simultaneous attraction and repulsion is to produce a profound disturbance of the authority of colonial discourse.

It was first developed in psychoanalysis to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. Adapted into colonial discourse theory by Homi Bhabha, it describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relationship between coloniser and colonised. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonised subject is never simply and completely opposed to the coloniser, rather than some colonised subjects complicit and others are resistant. Ambivalence in fact suggests the existence of complicity and resistance in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject. Ambivalence thus refers to the co-existence and interdependence of two contrary impulses or effects. Ambivalence therefore gives rise to a controversial proposition in Bhabha’s theory, that because the colonial relationship is always ambivalent, it generates the seeds of its own destruction. This is controversial because it implies that the colonial relationship is going to be disrupted, regardless of any resistance or rebellion on the part of the colonized. Bhabha’s argument is that colonial discourse is compelled to be ambivalent because it never really wants colonial subjects to be exact replicas of the colonizers – this would be too threatening. For instance, he gives the example of Charles Grant,
who, in 1792, desired to inculcate the Christian religion in Indians, but worried that this might make them ‘turbulent for liberty’ (Bhabha 87). Grant’s solution was to mix Christian doctrines with divisive caste practices to produce a ‘partial reform’ that would induce an empty imitation of English manners. Bhabha suggests that this demonstrates the conflict within imperialism itself that will inevitably cause its own downfall: it is compelled to create an ambivalent situation that will disrupt its assumption of monolithic power. Robert Young has suggested that the theory of ambivalence is Bhabha’s way of turning the tables on imperial discourse. The periphery, which is regarded as ‘the borderline, the marginal, the unclassifiable, the doubtful’ by the centre, responds by constituting the centre as an ‘equivocal, indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence’ (Bhabha161), but this is not a simple reversal of a binary, for Bhabha shows that both colonizing and colonized subjects are implicated in the ambivalence of colonial discourse.

The concept is related to hybridity because, just as ambivalence ‘decentre’ authority from its position of power, so that authority may also become hybridized when placed in a colonial context in which it finds itself dealing with, and often inflected by, other cultures. The hybridity of Charles Grant’s suggestion above, for instance, can be seen as a feature of its ambivalence. In this respect, the very engagement of colonial discourse with those colonized cultures over which it has domination, inevitably leads to an ambivalence that disables its monolithic dominance.

V.S. Naipaul, an Indian by ancestry, a Trinidadian by nativity and British by residence and intellectual training seems to be symptomatic of ambivalence both in his personal and fictional life. As Bruce King argues:
Naipaul’s novels tend to have a double structure in which events are both seen from a Western perspective – causality, individual will – and allude to a Hindu explanation in which the world of desire and things is an illusion consisting of cycles of creation and destruction. The European perspective dominates, but the Indian world view contests it and has its attractions. (Bruce King 10)

Naipaul’s ambivalence emanates from his diasporic sensibility and twice displacement. His birth in Trinidad displaced him from his Indian ethos and culture and separated him from his Indian identity. Further the domination of colonial culture in colonial Trinidad alienated him from Trinidad and suppressed his love for Trinidad. Moreover his diasporic movement to London further displaced him from his ancestral home India and place of birth Trinidad. This resulted in his ambivalent and fragmented identity. He could neither identify himself with the Indian Hindu Brahmins or the Caribbean Negroes nor with the European colonisers nor found himself fluctuating between his Indian and European identity. Landeg White makes a remark on the multifaceted aspects of Naipaul in different places as: "A Brahmin-cum-Englishman in Trinidad, a European in India, and an Indian in London"(7).

Naipaul’s family thus neither completely gave up their Indian culture nor completely accepted the European culture but indeed exhibited a hybrid culture retaining some of the Indian culture and accepting some of the European culture. Naipaul’s grandmother whom they called “Nanie”, a Hindi word for grandmother aptly represents this ambivalent attitude in following both Hindu way of life and celebrating catholic festivals. Patrick French records the hybrid culture of Naipaul’s family in his book The World Is What It Is: The Authorized Biography of V. S. Naipaul:
Nanie believed in the Hindu way of life but the irony of it, she would help with the churches and celebrate all the Catholic festivals because she didn’t believe in putting all your stones in one basket. She told us that she wanted us to speak in English, not Hindi, because we had to be educated. ‘Nanie made it clear in graphic terms that they were not part of a wider Trinidian Community.’ (French 26)

Moreover Naipaul’s belongingness to an uprooted traditional Hindu family indentured by the colonial power puts him to an odd indefinable situation where all the immigrants live in a predicament of rootlessness and homelessness. The geographical separation in the countryside of Trinidad brings these Indian immigrants in such a position that they could hardly come in contact with the outside world. Their ancestral homeland also became a distant illusion for the new generation and gradually the mixed culture of Trinidad led them to Homi Bhabha’s concept of ‘cultural hybridization’ (Bhabha 2).

Naipaul’s admittance of ambivalent attitude and constant longing for the homeland among the Indian immigrants in Trinidad comes across in his Nobel Lecture:

So, as a child I had this sense of two worlds. The world outside that tall corrugated-iron gate, and the world at home-or, at any rate, the world of my grandmother’s house. It was a remnant of our caste sense, that thing that excluded and shut out. In Trinidad, where as new arrivals we were a advantaged community, that excluding idea was a kind of protection; it enabled us- for the time being, to live in our own way and according to our own rules, to live in our own fading India. It made for an extraordinary self-
centeredness. We looked inwards, we lived out our days; the world outside existed in a kind of darkness; we inquired about nothing (n.p).

Naipaul’s divided self and ambivalent nature is reflected in many of his fictional characters. He affirms, “My world is more confused than that of the other writers; I’ve had to fit in as part of the background” (Drozdiak 17). As the immigrants are always in the state of rootlessness and exile, Naipaul and his protagonists very intensely reflect this rootlessness, exile and alienation. Rishi Pal Singh illustrates:

Amidst the chaos of the post independence situations, Naipaul, who himself is a displaced and exiled writer from Indian community in Trinidad, moves in and out of the consciousness of the protagonists coming from the rootless and derelict groups in alien lands. (Singh 116)

It can easily be noticed that the miseries and sufferings faced by Naipaul’s protagonists have natural conformity with the experiences of people all over the world, living in an alien land dominated by a colonized society. His in-depth understanding of the situation enables him to present his diasporic ambivalence not only in his fiction but also in his travel writings.

As a writer Naipaul’s splendid vision and voice emanate from his rootless, fluid and insecure socio-cultural background. His uneasiness with the subjugated identity and his agony and restlessness become quite obvious from the narration of his childhood memories in his works like Finding the Centre, A House for Mr. Biswas. Naipaul’s early works depict his ambivalent state trapped between two worlds inheriting two different cultures, one was his colonial world and another was his old Hindu world and none of these two worlds really constitutes his ‘home’.
White’s remark is of significant importance for this study because this work aims to show that Naipaul’s stance as a critic of the postcolonial world is not as straightforward as it might appear. A closer study of his fictional works, with the help of some concepts of postcolonial theory, will reveal that V. S. Naipaul is a man caught up between two worlds: the post-colonial world which he criticises, and the former coloniser, the metropolis, to which he seems to aspire. Even if it seems that Naipaul is, in Selwyn Cudjoe’s words, “a writer who has aligned himself with the values and preoccupations of the dominant Western culture,” (Cudjoe 5) the application of some selective methods of postcolonial criticism will show that Naipaul’s texts do contain points of resistance to the coloniser’s culture, which in turn indicates that he has not been able to disconnect himself entirely from his culture of origin. To W. Dissanayaka, Carmen and Wikramagamage, Naipaul’s ideological stance is unambiguous. They claim that “from his very young days, V.S. Naipaul decided to adopt the colonial gaze as a matter of conscious choice, to distinguish himself from the rest of society….A consequence of the adoption of the colonial gaze is to perceive everything indigenous as inferior, cheap and substandard.” (55)

Naipaul’s first novel *The Mystic Masseur*, set in colonial Trinidad and published in London in 1957 and the winner the famous John Llewellyn Rhys prize in 1958 aptly brings out Naipaul’s fragmented identity entrapped between two worlds through the protagonist Ganesh Ramsumair. The ambivalence in the sub-altern characters as reflected in the novel indeed reveals Naipaul’s own state of ambivalence regarding his own identity. Similar to many of his later novels, *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) also is autobiographical in approach.
The Mystic Masseur is a bildungsroman, set in the colonial Trinidad of 1940s and 1950s, depicting the life of Ganesh Ramsumair, a young boy of Indian community. Ganesh’s father Mr. Ramsumair, a masseur at Fourways gets Ganesh enrolled in a Government run school modelled after a British Public School where he is nurtured with the metropolitan values. Mr Ramsumair does a lot show off of Ganesh’s embarking of education by making him wear a khaki suit and khaki toupe and taking him round the place. Ganesh receives a lot of admiration from the local people but as he reaches Queen’s Royal college in Port of Spain, the admiration of the people changes to mortification. Both Ganesh and Mr Ramsumair are laughed at by the boys of Queen’s Royal College.

Ganesh feels alienated in the school with his Indian name, dressing style, pronounced Indian accent and Indian ways of living. He meets Indarsingh, another boy of Indian origin there who is a perfect example of Indian boy with English manners and language. Ganesh fails to match Indarsingh’s standard but still manages to pass the Cambridge Certificate examination with second grade.

Ramsumair sends congratulations to Ganesh and informs him that he has chosen a girl for Ganesh to marry. Ganesh refuses to marry the girl for which Mr Ramsumair abandons him. Ganesh takes the job of a teacher in a school at the south of Port of Spain but despite his sincere efforts fails to teach the boys and thus leaves his job. On returning he comes to know from Mrs Cooper, the landlord that someone has died at Fourways.

On reaching Fourways he soon discovers that it was his father who had died. After his father’s cremation he is taken care by a shopkeeper named Ramlogan. Ramlogan has a daughter whom he wants to marry Ganesh. Ramlogan tries to impress
Ganesh by often praising him for his education. He also tries to boast of his daughter’s literacy by hanging a notice written by her on his shop displaying her love for punctuations. Besides he tries to lure Ganesh by making a verbal display of all his wealth and property.

Ganesh agrees to marry Leela. After their marriage Ganesh moves to Fuente Grove and starts living in a house given by Ramlogan. He wants to open a Cultural Institute there with all the money received from Ramlogan as dowry. He meets Beharry, a shopkeeper who happens to be the only literate person there and becomes his friend. Ganesh’s Cultural Institute does not run so he decides to switch to massaging job, but his aunt, the Great Belcher and Beharry both disapprove the idea as being educated he should do something related to education. Ganesh then decides to become a writer but could not write even after reading and buying so many books. Eventually Leela leaves him and moves back to her father Ramlogan.

Ganesh feels hurt and comes up with his first book *101 Questions and Answers on Hindu Religion*. He brings Leela back from Ramlogan’s house, but his books are not sold and on the Great Belcher’s suggestion he takes up the profession of an Indian pundit and becomes the Ganesh the mystic. He becomes famous after curing the boy with a cloud. He continues to write books on Indian mythology and religion. Then in order to outdo his rival Narayan he contests in an election and becomes the MLA. He never goes to cocktail party at Government House and is always seen ready to present a petition to the Government He serves the people honestly as an MLA exposing the scandals after scandals. He is even dismissed as an irresponsible agitator with no following in the Colonial Office reports.
Once in September 1949, there happens to be a wild strike in some sugar estate in South Trinidad. The strikers burn the cane fields for which they are arrested by the policeman. The situation worsens with threats and counter threats. So he comes forward for the settlement between the strikers and the estates and goes to address the strikers but being unaware of the real matter he fails to calm the people. The agitated crowd attacks him. He feels extremely hurt and decides to give up working for the people and he calls a Press conference and warns people that the labours movement in Trinidad is dominated by communists and he has often unwittingly been made their tool, so from now onwards he pledges to fight against communism in Trinidad and the rest of the free world.

Ganesh, the central character in the novel, like Naipaul is a Hindu immigrant in colonial Trinidad and suffers from displacement and exile and feels alienated from the both his India, his land of ancestors and Trinidad, his land of birth. The story covers the period from Ganesh’s childhood to his adulthood and shows the strife and struggles of Ganesh to cope with the identity crisis and rootlessness aroused as a displaced and exile of Indian origin in Caribbean island under British colonialism. Succumbing to dominant culture of the British, Ganesh suffers from identity crisis. As Ashcroft and et.al state:

Diasporic peoples throughout the world further problematize the idea of ‘exile’. Where is the place of ‘home’ to be located for such groups? In the place of birth (nateo), in the displaced cultural community into which the person is born, or in the nation-state in which this diasporic community is located?
Similarly Ganesh is confused which to call his home, his ancestral home of India from where his parents have come or to his place of birth Trinidad, the Caribbean islands, though in reality he wishes neither. He indeed wishes to be identified with the most dominant and powerful people of the Caribbean, the British, which is indeed an unconscious hidden desire of every “other” or the sub-altern in a colonial state.

Ganesh’s shuttling between the places of Indian community at Fourways and Fuente Grove and British community at Port of Spain in Trinidad displaces him of his identity, succumbing to the concept of place and displacement as put up by Ashcroft et al, explaining the concept ‘place and displacement’:

A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or ‘voluntary’ removal for indentured labour. Or it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model. The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two. (Ashcroft 9)

Ganesh’s experiences affect his perception of the self with the external culture and affect his cultural identity. The change which is an internal psychological transformation is externally manifested through the choices and preferences that he makes in retaining certain cultural components while discarding the others at various stages of his life.
Throughout the novel he is seen to drift between British identity and Indian identity as he changes places and takes up different professions at different stages of his life. As a child due to dominance of colonial culture in a colonial school he feels alienated with his Indian identity and Indian lifestyle and so he wants to discard his Indian identity and take up the British identity by adopting a British name. So he anglicises his name from ‘Ganesh’ to ‘Gareth’ connoting his shift to Englishness. In this connection Champa Rao Mohan writes:

The major themes that emerge from a reading of his novels are related to the problems of the colonized people— their sense of alienation from the landscape, their identity crisis, the paradox of freedom and the problem of neo-colonialism in the ex-colonies.(8)

As Fanon opines about the black colonised people’s behaviour on coming in contact with the colonizer’s:

When the black man comes into contact with the white world he goes through an experience of sensitization. His ego collapses. His self-esteem evaporates. He ceases to be a self-motivated person. The entire purpose of his behavior is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man.(foreword, viii)

Ganesh is also seen to lose his confidence in his own culture on coming in contact with the dominant culture of the colonizer. Consequently the ‘khakhi suit’ and the ‘khaki toupe’ which he wears when he for admission in the Queen’s Royal College at the Port of Spain a mark of high official and pride and brings him a lot of admiration and praises from the people of Indian community in Fourways, becomes a matter of mortification for others and shame for him in the British community of Port
of Spain: “When they got to St Joseph, Ganesh began to feel shy. Their dress and manner were no longer drawing looks of respect. People were smiling, and when they got off at the railway terminus in Port of Spain, a woman laughed.” (10)

His Indian attire which makes him feel important and respected in the Fourways, the same attire makes him feel ashamed of self in the colonial community of Port of Spain, yielding to ambivalent emotions of pride and shame in him. Moreover as the colonizer usually look down upon the colonized’s culture; the English principal of queen’s Royal College too scolds Ganesh, when he comes with a bald head after his holidays: “Ramsumair, you are creating a disturbance in the school. Wear something on your head.” (11)

Ganesh starts feeling alienated with his Indian identity in Queen’s Royal College. His Indian name, Indian way of dressing Indian accent of speaking, following Indian customs make him feel out of place and ashamed of self. So in order to escape from being mortified he decides to do away Indian identity and changes his name from ‘Ganesh’ to ‘Gareth’:

Ganesh never lost his awkwardness. He was so ashamed of his Indian name that for a while he spread a story that he was really called Gareth. This did him little good. He continued to dress badly, he didn’t play games, and his accent remained too clearly that of Indian from the country. He never stopped being a country boy. (11)

As Albert Memmi writes in his book *Colonizer and the Colonized*:
The entire bureaucracy, the entire court system, all industry hears and uses the colonizer’s language….make the colonized feel like a foreigner in his own country(Memmi 150-151).

The presence of the colonizer’s language everywhere causes alienation, in the colonized resulting in high reverence for the colonizer’s language and looking down on the native languages. Ganesh too, like most of the colonised people, has high reverence for the English language. He admires Indarsingh, another boy of Indian descent having mastery of English language. He sees that everybody thinks that Indarsingh is a brilliant boy and quite sure of his bright future as he can make ‘long speeches in the Literary Society Debates’, recite ‘verses of his own at Recitation Contests’, and win the ‘Impromptu Contests’.

He seems to love the coloniser’s language too. Thus when he embarks on his writing career he chooses to write in English, he even decides to write books for the American publishing Company the Streets and Smith. Although he is never able to write any book for the Street and Smith, but the whole process makes him think on his art of writing and he decides to improve his English language. He feels that being the residents of British country it’s high time that they perfected their English so even asks Leela and Beharry to improvise it.

Street and Smith had made him think about the art of writing. Like many Trinidadians Ganesh could write correct English but it embarrassed him to talk anything but dialect except on very formal occasions. So while, with the encouragement of Street and Smith, he perfected his prose to a Victorian weightiness he continued to talk Trinidadian, much against his will.
One day he said, ‘Leela, is high time we realize that we living in a British country and I think we shouldn’t be shame to talk the people language good.

(65)

As he moves back to Fourways and later to Funte Grove the places inhabited by Indians like him he feels more at ease and becomes comfortable with his own Indian identity. The same Ganesh who as a school boy feels out of place in a colonial school and wants to do away with everything Indian in him later after marrying Ramlogan’s daughter when he goes to Fuente Grove, he decides to open up a Indian cultural institute instead of a British one with the money and house given by Ramlogan in the form of dowry to further Hindu culture and Science of Thought in Trinidad for which he even puts up an advertisement in the Trinidad Sentinel newspaper showing Ramlogan as the founder and himself as the president of the institute:

And the next morning the Trinidad Sentinel carried this story on page five

**BENEFACTOR ENDOWS CULTURAL INSTITUTE**

Shri Ramlogan, merchant, of Fourways, near Debe, has donated a considerable sum of money with the view of founding a Cultural institute at Fuente Grove. The aim of the proposed Institute, which has yet to be named, will be the furthering of Hindu Cultural and Science of Thought in Trinidad.

The President of the Institute, it is learnt, will be Ganesh Ramsimair, B.A.

(54-55)

Besides, when he takes up the job of a mystic masseur at Fuente Grove, succumbing to the demand of his new job he takes up to Indian clothes, starts
following Indian culture and reciting Hindi verses and even adds the word “mystic” to give weight to his name and also gives his home an Indian look. He welcomes his clients in Hindi to sound like an authentic pundit, recites Hindi couplets, and arranges for Leela as her interpreter who conveys his thoughts in English to the clients:

Ganesh began to chant in Hindi.

Leela asked the boy, ‘He ask whether you believe in him’.

The boy nodded without conviction.

Leela said to Ganesh in English, I don’t think he really believe in you.’ And she said it in Hindi afterwards.

Ganesh spoke in Hindi again.

Leela said to the boy, ‘He say you must believe.’

Ganesh chanted.

‘He say you must believe, if only for two minutes, because if you don’t believe in him completely, he will die too. (122)

Further in order to make the place look like belonging to an Indian mystic he gives his home an entire Indian look he makes a shed in front of his front yard, thatches it with palm and puts some sand on it. He also displays about three hundred of his books, including the Question and Answers in the shed. In addition to that he nails a signboard inscribed ‘GANESH, Mystic’ on the mango tree in front of his house. He covers the walls with religious quotations in Hindi and English, and with Hindu religious pictures.
Although he decides to make a shift from the English culture to adopting back the Indian ways but the effect of the dominant English culture still persists and can be observed in his wearing both English clothes and Indian clothes, speaking both English and Hindi, building an Indo-western house. He tries to strike a balance between his Indian and British Identity by choosing to wear Indian clothes at home and English for outside, becoming bilingual and having an Indo-western look for the house.

He puts up his Indian attire at home when people come to meet him and he switches to his trousers and shirts when he goes out to meet people out of Fuente Grove. So once when he wants to go out to meet someone at the Oilfields he asks Leela to take out his ‘English clothes’. He changes from dhoti and ‘koortah’ to trousers and shirt. Before he left he said, ‘You know, sometimes I glad I get college Education.”(121)

Moreover when he goes out for lectures he takes his books in taxis makes a display of his learning and looks authentic. He addresses the crowd in Hindi but substantiates his points by showing quotes from books in English. His bilingualism often makes people marvel at him. Further his respect for both Hindi and English can be observed from his new sign board where he inscribes statements in both Hindi and English.

A professional sign-writer was summoned from San Fernando to rewrite the GANESH, Mystic sign. At the top he wrote, in Hindi, Peace to you all; and below Spiritual solace and comfort may be had here at any time on every day except Saturday and Sunday. It is regretted, however that requests for monetary assistance cannot be entertained. In English.(143)
As he prospers as a mystic, he pulls down his old house and puts up a mansion of two stories with concrete walls and more than a hundred windows like the Government house. His new house has both Indian and western semblance. While the outer architecture with its colour and temple gives it an Indian flavour, the interiors with the carpets, refrigerator and the modern lavatory gives it the western touch.

Again as Ganesh comes in contact with the English people and their culture after becoming an M.L.A and later an M.B.E., and moving to Port of Spain, his confidence in his Indian identity again loosens and he gives up wearing Indian clothes and speaking Hindi Language, sells his Indo-Western style house of Fuente Groove and even anglicises his name to G.S. Muir, Esq. from Ganesh Ramsumair. Port of Spain as Pratt explains becomes ‘the contact zone’ for Ganesh the ‘social spaces’ where ‘disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today’ (Pratt 4)

His leaving of Fuente groove is symbolic of the disintegration of the East Indian Community by discarding the Indian identity and taking up the British identity. It also signifies his end of ambivalence and final resolution to take up the British identity. Mohan Champa Rao has observed in her book Postcolonial Situations in the Novels of V S Naipaul that succumbing to the constant conflicting pull of Eastern and western world, both Naipaul and Ganesh of The Mystic Masseur, finally make their choice in favour of western worlds:

Naipaul draws attention to the inadequacies of colonial societies which are often characterized by a lack of acumen for specialization. Trinidad is portrayed as a society in upheaval, where the old order is giving way to new
forces of modernity and the East Indian community of which Ganesh as a representative is particularly vulnerable. Ganesh’s success story is really the story of the disintegration of the East Indian Community, which under the conflicting pull of the Eastern and Western world, makes the final choice in favour of the Western civilization. (Rao 33)

Ganesh’s character like Naipaul is constantly in a state of ambivalence and drifts between Indian culture and European culture. The more he comes in contact with the colonizers the more his confidence in his Indian culture shakes and it leads to the disintegration of the native culture and he starts adopting western ways of life by his changing Indian name Ganesh to ‘Gareth’ in colonial school and to ‘G Ramsay Muir’ during his visit to Britain for conference. Besides his taking up the western attire of ‘lounge suit’ during a strike of September 1949, also the dinner-jackets for official dinners at Government House and his impeccably dressed like an English during his Britain visit clearly marks his shift to western culture, but when he moves away from the colonial domination to the rural places of Trinidad and takes up the profession of the mystic masseur, he is seen to drawn to his Indian culture which is reflected in his taking up Indian attire of ‘dhoti’ ‘kurtah’ and ‘ turban’, reciting Hindi slogans, adopting Hindu ways of life etc. Nevertheless the colonial culture still allures him and he does not give up his western ways of living and indeed adopts a hybrid culture by becoming bilingual, wearing both Indian and western attire and building an Indo-Western house. However as he becomes an MLA and then an MBE his ambivalence, the uncertainty of mind, the inbetweenness and the hanging between two cultures of Indian and British culminate in his final resolution for British culture and giving up Indian culture with Indian name, attire, language and the Indian style house of Fuente Grove and adopting the western culture and becoming a mimic man