CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

Migration is a one way trip. There is no “home” to go back to.

— Stuart Hall\(^1\)

I

Since 1980s, the migrant literature has been an area of interest not only in the academia but also in the field of research. Migrant literature primarily refers to the writings by the migrants. The migrant writers produce a kind of literature that mostly deal with the problems of migrancy and its subsequent impact on the migrant people with reference to the crisis of identity and existence itself. The study attempts to negotiate the issues of migrancy both human and literary. An attempt has also been made to deal with the question of identity with regard to the converted people in the non-Arab Muslim world and the migrant people in general.

The question of identity is a much debated and relevant issue in postcolonial and globalized\(^2\) world today. This world has witnessed an unprecedented flow of people, capital and technology. But, the flow of people, goods and resources began with European colonialism which not only conquered other people’s lands but also controlled the people,


\(^2\) Globalization is a process by which something becomes global. The term is closely associated with economic globalization—the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign investment, capital flows, migration, the spread of technology, military presence etc. The world which goes through such process can be said to be globalized.
wealth and resources of the conquered lands or the colonies. Consequently, there was movement of people in both directions — from the colonizing ‘centre’ to colonial ‘periphery’ and vice versa. For example, the colonizers came and settled in the colonized lands on the one hand, and on the other, they transported the politically powerless and economically impoverished colonial subjects to other parts of the world, mostly from the European colonies as slaves and indentured labourers and they were made to work and produce goods for metropolitan consumptions in the imperial ‘center.’ However, with decolonization, the movements of people either through forced migration or voluntary exiles of intellectuals from the once colonized lands got accelerated. The past century saw large scale displacement or dispersal of people through forced or voluntary migration to various parts of the world. Thus, once dislocated from the country or place of their origin, the migrants or displaced people undergo traumatic experiences of non-belonging and alienation in the places where they struggle to (re)locate and feel at home. But, sadly, these people can hardly ever (re)locate themselves in that strange/alien place and feel belonged. The migrants, thus, become ‘hybrid’ individuals due to linguistic and cultural transformations they undergo. Their identity is challenged by the ambivalent nature of their existence that they start wandering with the questions such as “who am I? Where do I belong?” These are the vital questions that need to be answered. So, in order to search the answers to these questions, it is necessary to address the problem(s) of migrancy and identity in the postcolonial context.

Postcolonialism is an important discipline in cultural and literary studies today. As a major force in criticism during the late 1980s and early 1990s, it has played an important role in anti-colonial political movements in the colonized lands. Again, it became a field of intellectual inquiry when the colonial regimes began to disintegrate after the World War II. It analyses the literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination from the day of the first colonial contact to the present, while, on the other, it also
analyses the colonialist and anti-colonialist ideological forces in operation politically, socially, culturally and psychologically — which, on the one hand, pressed the colonized to internalize the colonizer’s values and, on the other hand, promoted the resistance of colonized people against their oppressors. This study argues how the once colonized people, particularly the colonial migrant intellectuals like V. S. Naipaul who had left the colonies to locate themselves in the metropolitan centers of the world, mimic their colonial masters and try to internalize the values and cultures of the West. Effort has also been made here to analyse the plight of the migrants in general and converted people, the non-Arab Muslims in particular with regard to their identity and existence.

The word ‘postcolonial’ is a much contested term. It is contested because it is often used with a hyphen in between ‘post’ and ‘colonial’ and thereby drawing diverse meanings and attitudes towards colonialism. As far as its current use is concerned, it does not simply mean ‘after colonialism’ or the period that comes after colonialism or imperialism, it also means the time that begins from the first colonial encounter. It may be true however, that with decolonization, the once colonized lands achieved their independence, but, a large number of those lands could not recover themselves from colonial dependence often termed as colonial hangover or interference till today. There is, however, no proper demarcation between the end of colonialism and the beginning of postcolonialism as none can say exactly when colonialism ended and postcolonialism started. Some scholars opine that some form of colonialism exists even today in the form of political and economic interventions, while others are of the opinion that, postcolonialism begins “from the very first moment of colonial contact” (Ashcroft et al, 1995: 117). Again, in the introduction to their influential work *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Bill Ashcroft et al have used the term ‘post-colonial’ (as hyphenated) to cover “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day [since] there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the
historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” (2). They, however, designate the literatures produced from Africa, Australia, Canada, The Caribbean, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and South Pacific island countries as ‘post-colonial’ literature. Each of these literatures, therefore, has one thing in common beyond their distinctive regional characteristics. Each has “emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial.” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 2)

Robert C. Young sees ‘postcolonialism’ as “a body of writing that attempts to shift the dominant ways in which the relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed” (Young, 2003: 2). For Young, shifting of the dominant ways means turning the world upside down as if looking from the other side, for a different and yet significant experience. Postcolonialism, thus, challenges the dominant ways of looking at things mainly from Western point of view. It gives voice to the weak, to the peoples who are in the margins or the periphery. Young, in his book Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction (2003), opines that postcolonialism claims the right of all the people on the globe equally. It is, however, unfortunate that due to European colonization and appropriation of power by the West, often referred to as Eurocentrism, the world today is based on two unequal divisions: the West and the rest. Postcolonialism, thus:

. . . seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave . . . [it] is about changing world . . . It threatens privilege and power. It refuses to acknowledge the superiority of western cultures.” (Young, 2003: 7)
Thus, taking Young’s definition of postcolonialism into consideration, it can be said that postcolonial literature is subversive because it seeks to intervene and dismantle the knowledge and power structures of both the West and the non-West. It questions the European superiority in knowledge production and at the same time, it critiques the native/non-Western ways of accepting the West’s hegemony.

With the decline of the European empires and with decolonization, former colonies in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean became independent. The independence brought the colonizers and the colonized, at par. The once-colonial masters have been decentered (as the colonizers saw themselves at the center of the world, while the colonized were seen at the margins), and thus, the hegemonic power paradigm is subverted. This subversion (which is seen in some countries as independence struggle and resistance against colonial powers), however, in turn, produced a kind of cultural and intellectual vacuum which, in Naipaul’s phrase, is produced due to the “overthrow in three continents of established social organizations” (TMM, 2001: 32). This cultural and intellectual vacuum has resulted in voluntary intellectual and political exiles to metropolitan centers of the world, mostly located in the UK and the USA. People like Derek Walcott, Jean Rhys, Ben Okri, George Lamming, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, C. L. R. James, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Richard Rodriguez, Kazuo Ishiguro, Timothy Mo and many others, had left their respective place of birth (mostly former colonies) for better opportunities and became expatriates. They later came to be known as migrant/diasporic writers.

The noted South-African critic and novelist, Elleke Boehmer makes an interesting study of the postcolonial migrant writers. In her seminal work *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature* (1995), she underscores the significant contribution made by the migrant writers in the field of postcolonial literature. It cannot, however, be denied that there is a paradigm shift
in both form and subject-matter since postcolonial literature articulates the voice of the weak and subjugated people as if the empire is writing back. Boehmer, by using Bhabha’s terms, observes that the postcolonial migrant writing is the writing of ‘not quite’ and ‘in-between’. She underlines the unprecedented migrations and uprooting of people, not only from former colonies, but also from the countries teeming with internal conflicts, economic hardships, lack of opportunities etc. to the metropolitan centers. As per UN estimation, about 100 million people in the world today qualify as migrants who live as minorities and in the states of non-belonging (Boehmer, 2005: 226). Again, Boehmer rightly notes that cultural creolizations of the migrants have led to linguistic creolization, and as a result, the English language has become a process of mass literary transplantation. Thus, ranging from professional choice (a writing vocation in Naipaul’s case) to political exiles, the writers from once-colonized lands have become members of the 21st century “condition of energized migrancy” (Boehmer, 2005: 226). For, Boehmer, therefore, a postcolonial writer in the 21st century, is:

. . . likely to be a cultural traveller or an ‘extra-territorial’, than a national. Ex-colonial by birth, ‘Third World’ in cultural interest, cosmopolitan in almost every other way, she or he works within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a national, ethnic, or regional background.” (Boehmer, 2005: 227)

Most of the postcolonial migrant writers fall into the category prescribed by Boehmer. Migrant writers, therefore, undergo a kind of cultural and linguistic translation. Their ‘transnational’ and ‘translational’ characteristic features and identity have placed them in the position of ‘not quite’ or ‘in-between.’ Their own ‘hybridity’ due to their cultural translations, argues Boehmer, has made their (migrant) text a “hybrid object” (Boehmer,
This study, therefore, attempts to designate V. S. Naipaul as a postcolonial migrant writer or in Boehmer’s term, a ‘cultural traveller’ who has written no less than thirty books, many of whom, blurring the boundaries of different genres.

Boehmer has identified the postcolonial migrant writer as a cultural traveller. But, migration is different from travel and cannot be applied in a synonymous way. Ian Chambers, in his scholarly work *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (1994), observes that “to travel implies movement between fixed positions, a site of departure, a point of arrival, the knowledge of an itinerary. It also intimates an eventual return, a potential homecoming” (Chambers, 1994: 5) while on the contrary, migrancy “involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable and certain” (Chambers, 1994: 5). Unlike travel, migrancy calls for a ‘dwelling’ in places, histories, language and identities that are subject to ‘mutation’ and always in transit, the promise of a homecoming, thus, becomes an impossibility. (Chambers, 1994: 5) On the other hand, beyond the debate of arrival and departure of migrancy and travel, Salman Rushdie considers migration as a universal phenomenon which befalls all mankind. For Rushdie, migration does not only mean displacement of people in history, it refers to a state of displacement that fall on the path of all mankind. In his essay “Gunter Grass” in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), Rushdie writes, “We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples.” (Rushdie, 1991: 279)

It is commonly known that colonialism has been an important event in the history of human civilization that has affected people’s lives in many ways. Almost three quarters of the world population have experienced colonialism and have had their lives shaped or brutally dismantled by it. From time immemorial, there has been a tendency among human societies to expand and strengthen their grip on earth — to territorialize and annex; to conquer other societies not only for political reasons, but also for economic and cultural reasons. Cultural colonization is the other face of colonialism which draws the Eurocentric
belief that the European culture is superior to other non-European cultures. It appropriates superiority of Western culture and civilization and is seen as a standard by which other cultures are to be judged or contrasted. The greatest empires in the world such as the Roman, the Aztec, the Ottoman, the Chinese, the Mughal, the French and the British empires are founded more or less on such principles. However, the modern European Empires, such as the French and the British have gone much beyond the idea of imperialism unlike the Roman, the Aztec, the Chinese, the Ottoman or the Mughal Empires. The French and the British colonialism have been accompanied by the idea of capitalism. Theirs is a kind of colonialism that subjugates the natives or non-Europeans as inferior ‘other,’ their land and resources are exploited, drained and transported to the ‘mother’ country, their cultures and values are trampled in order to impose the colonizer’s language, culture, values and institutions. Such kind of colonialism or imperialism can be seen as political, economic and cultural subjugation of the colonized societies which Antonio Gramsci would term hegemonization. Western scholars however, argue in favour of the legitimacy of European colonialism and try to appropriate it, as in Rudyard Kipling’s words, “The White Man’s Burden” to civilize the ‘other’ i.e. the native or the so-called uncivilized non-Whites.

The colonial encounter has thus, led to the binaries — such as the colonizer and the colonized; the master and the slave; the West and the rest; white and non-white; the Orient and the Occident; the ‘self’ and the ‘other,’ the ‘centre’ and the ‘margin’ or ‘periphery’ etc. Such binaries in fact, have come into currency with the publication of Edward W. Said’s Orientalism (1978). The center/periphery binary is a much debated concept in colonial discourse. Said explains this binary as a system that explains both the colonial and postcolonial world. This binary division claims that the colonizing ‘center’ is the home of science, civilization and development, whereas, the colonized ‘periphery’ is the home of superstition, barbarity and backwardness. By following this principle, the West or the
colonizing ‘center’ has tried to appropriate colonialism with a view to ‘raise up’ the colonized. However, the center/periphery binary logic has been challenged by many postcolonial critics who argue that ‘mapping’ is a highly subjective and power-determined experience — whose center? and whose periphery? after all, is the crucial question, as the West, since the early eighteenth century, has had the power to arrogate to itself the position of center by making all else peripheral. (Hawley, 2004: 85) Therefore, the most vital question that stirs our mind in today’s fragmented and broken world is: “Whose centre, whose periphery?” (Chambers, 1994: 67) as the postcolonial world has seen an ever-growing migration of people from the once-colonized societies (the peripheries) to the metropolitan ‘centers’ of the world and thereby blurring the boundaries of spatial or geographical differences and even the binary of center/periphery.

It is no exaggeration to say that postcolonial theory and criticism owes much to Said’s work that has shown how Orientalism has maintained cultural superiority of the West over the East. In his introduction to *Orientalism*, Said argues that the Orient is a European construct — a space for European representation of the non-European cultures whose people are represented as the stereotyped inferior ‘other.’ Orientalism, Said maintains, is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 2001: 3). Though the colonizers have left the lands they colonized, but, interestingly, Western cultural colonization exists even today in the form of education, culture and values, system of governments etc. In this way, the formerly colonized people are left with a psychological ‘inheritance’ of a negative self-image which alienates themselves from their own indigenous cultures. Postcolonialism or postcolonial criticism, therefore, also addresses the problems of identity in cultural context since the colonizers saw themselves culturally superior and the colonized as culturally inferior.
Though Said is credited for his pioneering contribution to the emergence of postcolonial criticism, yet, much before Said, Frantz Omar Fanon has dealt with the mechanics of colonialism and its calamitous effect in his influential works — *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Born in 1925 in French Martinique, Fanon’s works deal with racial and existential issues that show how identities are formed and maintained. He figures the end of colonialism in a different way, by giving it a psychological twist, and argues that colonialism imprisons the mind as chains imprison the body. The end of colonialism, for him, meant not just political and economic change but it has stamped drastic psychological change in the mind of the colonized. Fanon, thus brings into focus, the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized, the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ as he explains the consequences of identity formation for the colonized subject who is forced into the ‘internalization’ of the self as an ‘other.’ Chapter III discusses the existential issues of the colonized subjects and the resultant ambivalence in their existence.

The existential dilemma of the colonized subjects including the migrant or the diasporic people in the postcolonial world, gets wide attention in the works of the postcolonial writers. As for culture and identity formation, Said invokes Foucauldian idea of knowledge-power and Marxist critic Raymond William’s idea of dominant discourse(s). In his seminal work *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said makes a crucial point saying that imperialism is not only about conquering geographical territories, but it is also about legitimizing it through Western narratives appropriating the ‘right’ to conquest. The notion is that, in the imperialist’s concept, the European culture emerges as superior against the non-European. This is the idea with which V. S. Naipaul is nurtured. Born and brought up in a transplanted British colony in the New World, Naipaul, as a child, had the belief that the “true, pure world” (TMP, 2001: 157) lies elsewhere on the “snow slopes” (TMP, 2001: 157) and not on an island which is “an obscure New World transplantation, second-hand and
barbarous” (TMP, 2001: 127). The notion is that, for him, true culture and civilization rests with the Western world, especially in the metropolitan centre(s) and not in the ‘unimportant’ and ‘barbarous’ world of the periphery. Chapter IV is wholly devoted to argue on the civilizational issues in order to critique Naipaul’s idea of the ‘universal’ civilization with the help of Samuel P. Huntington’s idea of civilization(s).

Since the purpose of this study is to negotiate the problems of migration, identity, culture and civilization, an attempt has been made here to locate V. S. Naipaul’s major non-fictional works not only with contemporary postcolonial situation but also with colonialism itself. The major non-fictional works which have been considered for discussion in the present study are: The Middle Passage (1962), An Area of Darkness (1964), India: A Wounded Civilization (1977), Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey (1981), The Enigma of Arrival (1987), India: A Million Mutinies Now ((1990), Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples (1998), The Writer and the World: Essays (2002) and Literary Occasions: Essays (2003). It is to be noted here that colonialism has shattered the whole world and has disrupted not only the colonized lands but also the colonizers as well. It has dismantled the geo-political, demographic and cultural cartography of the whole world.

II

The term identity can be defined and located in many ways. It is generally defined as a state of being whom or what a person is, and his/her distinctiveness that separates him/her

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3 Samuel P. Huntington is Albert J. Weatherhead III Professor at Harvard and the director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies and chairman of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies. He is widely known for his controversial thesis of “the clash of civilizations” initially published as an article in the Summer 1993 issue of Foreign Affairs.
from others. It is, in other words, the sense of being or of becoming that distinguishes one from the others. Identity is never fixed or static; it is fluid and always in process. An attempt has been made in this study to locate the ‘identity’ of the migrants as well as the ‘converts’ or the non-Arab Muslims by using Amartya Sen’s\(^4\) definition of the term in *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (2006) in which he defines human identity as fluid, multidimensional or pluralistic that cannot be confined to a singular identity.

Identity, today, has become a major concern not only for social scientists and psychologists but also for the common humanity as well. Since the time of colonization, there has been an increased mobility of people across the globe. In the postcolonial era, the world has seen unprecedented translocal flows of people, capital and technology, culture and religion. Consequently, people of different cultures and religious background began to mingle and mix and thus creating new spaces of identity and value systems. The question of self and identity has been accelerated by displacement and migration or exile, often voluntary, to different parts of the world. Thus, over the last few decades, since the fall of the empire, there has been a renewed questioning of the self to redefining and relocating the ‘identity’ due to globalization, cultural homogenization\(^5\), ‘hybridity’\(^6\) and ethno-cultural and religious migration.

\(^4\) Amartya Sen is Lamont University Professor at Harvard and was formerly Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. He authored a number of books which include *On Economic Inequality*, *Development as Freedom*, *The Argumentative Indian*, and *Identity and Violence*. He won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998.

\(^5\) Cultural homogenization is said to be the result of globalization. It is the mingling of different cultural practices into one uniform cultural practice that does not allow easy identification of the characteristics of many cultures. As people of two or more cultures interact and intermingle in such a manner that they lose their individual cultural identities and merged into a one uniform culture than does not show any trace of diversity of different cultures among the people.
Some social scientists consider the term ‘identity’ as fluid, changing and multi-dimensional. Due to the increased mobility of people not only across the states but also international boundaries, it has been observed that the identity of a particular man in a particular time and space experiences crisis, often involving threat. It is naturally the threat of identity and existence of the migrant/other subjects submerged in the drive of the dominant class of people who grind the axe of the so-called ‘son of the soil’ and thus problematizing the situation in a society in terms of human relations. He/she becomes either transnational/translocal or an unwanted ‘alien’ and ultimately suffers from a crisis of identity and a sense of alienation.

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen considers ‘identity’ as multi-dimensional or pluralistic. There are a great variety of categories to which an individual simultaneously belongs. One can be at the same time, as Sen argues, without any contradiction, “an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, a historian, a schoolteacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, . . . to all of which this person simultaneously belongs gives her a particular identity.” (Sen, 2006: xiii)

Thus, it is evident from Sen’s thesis, that, human identity is pluralistic and cannot be confined to a singular identity. Therefore, a solitarist approach to human identity gives way to misunderstandings among different peoples of the globe which further triggers racial, religious and even civilizational crisis.

The term ‘identity’ is itself very problematic and has varying degrees of scopes and meanings such as — search for identity, loss of identity or the widely used term ‘identity

6 The rhetoric of hybridity is fundamentally associated with the emergence of postcolonial discourse. Homi Bhabha’s The Location of Culture (1994) is a key text in the development of hybridity theory as a paradigm of colonial anxiety. The argument is that colonial hybridity, as a cultural form that produced ambivalence not only in the colonized subjects but also in the colonial masters and altered the authority of power.
crisis’ etc. In the contemporary world, identities — both personal and national (which include ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, sexual and local) are much contested. There are instances of conflicting identities all over the globe. Kathryn Woodward makes an interesting study of identity in *Identity and Difference* (1997) where she says that “Identities in the contemporary world derive from a multiplicity of sources — from nationality, ethnicity, social class, community, gender, sexuality — sources which may conflict in the construction of identity positions and lead to contradictory fragmented identities” (Woodward, 1997: 1). She argues that one may experience some struggles between conflicting identities based on one’s different positions in the world: as a member of a particular community, ethnicity, social class, religion etc. Yet, “identity gives us a location in the world and presents the link between us and the society in which we live . . . [it] gives us an idea who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live” (Woodward, 1997: 1).

Identity is often defined by difference; in other words, it is defined by what it is not. Woodward suggests that identity marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and again, it also marks the ways in which we are different from those who do not (1997: 1-2). Identities are, thus, often constructed in terms of binary oppositions such as — self/other, us/them, insider/outsider, in here/out there, black/white, man/woman, civilized/barbarian etc. Since identities are defined, constructed, consumed and regulated with particular culture or society where meanings are created through “symbolic systems of representation about the identity positions” (Woodward, 1997: 2) within that culture or society. That is why the construction, meaning and representation of identities differ from society to society, civilization to civilization since their culture and value systems differ at large. For example, while the West considers itself ‘civilized,’ the non-West, as per the principle of opposition, automatically becomes ‘uncivilized’ or ‘barbarian’ for them. Their ‘self’ must be positioned against an ‘other,’ and their ‘centre’ must have a ‘periphery.’ This
study thus, addresses various faces of identity formations, locations and representations, and attempts to negotiate through various non-fictional texts of Naipaul which are not only populated by different migrant people like the author himself but also the ‘converted’ people in the non-Arab Muslim world as well.

Stuart Hall too makes an interesting study of identity and cultural representation in his brilliant essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” “Identity,” says Hall, “is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, with the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a “production,” which is never complete, always in the process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.” (Braziel and Mannur, 2003: 234). According to Hall, there are two kinds of identity — first, identity as ‘being’ that includes a sense of unity and commonality, and second, identity as ‘becoming.’ He, however, uses the term in relation to diasporic identities including his own to explain how the first one is a necessary condition while the second one is appropriate in defining postcolonial conditions.

To explain the process of identity formation, Hall uses Jacques Derrida's theory of ‘difference/differance’ in support of his argument. For Derrida, ‘difference’ is not exactly ‘otherness.’ With him, ‘difference’ becomes ‘differance’ where meaning is always deferred for endless ‘signs’ or significations. His sense of ‘difference’ challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation, and show how meaning is never finished or completed, but moves on to carry other extended meanings. Therefore, an attempt has been made here in this study to show that identities are never fixed; they are constantly in the process of making and unmaking especially while dealing with the identity of the ‘converted’ people. Naipaul’s assessment of the identity of these people is based on solitarist approach which formulates only a fixed, singular identity. Chapter II discusses this issue while covering not only the ‘converted’ people but also the identity of the migrant people as well.
One of the most important writers of literary diaspora, V. S. Naipaul was born in Chaguanas, near Port of Spain, Trinidad, in August 17, 1932 in a family of Indian indentured immigrants. His grandfather migrated from the poverty-stricken eastern Uttar Pradesh to Trinidad in the 1880s. It was at a time when, after the abolition of slavery, there was urgent need of cheap labourers for the British plantation colonies throughout the world. These indentured labourers were then transplanted from one part of the British Empire to another — from one hemisphere to another. It was a traumatic experience for these migrants who have left their homes behind for an unknown world in order to change their fortunes and to get rid of the curse of poverty and misfortune in their native land. This population transfer or transplantation was a colonial enterprise for the benefit of the colonizers. First, they had drained the wealth of the colonies to export them to their ‘mother’ country by making the colonized land(s) impoverished, and then they had taken advantage of the poverty and distress (which Naipaul terms as ‘darkness’ in An Area of Darkness) of the colonized subjects and transplanted them in an alien land. In that strange and unknown world, these migrants had to suffer from the trauma of the memories of past which they had left behind in India and therefore, have suffered from a sense of non-belonging or homelessness and identity crisis. The miserable plight of these migrants is to be discussed in detail in both Chapters II and III.

Naipaul’s grandfather was an indentured labourer who worked in the sugar cane fields in Trinidad. But, as he was a Brahmin whose family in India abounded with pundits, he wished his son Seepersad (Naipaul’s father) to become a pundit; but the latter could only become a journalist. Naipaul’s two other uncles continued working in the cane fields. Naipual inherited from his father, the wish to read, the wish to write and become a writer. His
father, Seepersad Naipaul was a self-educated man who wished to be a writer, but the condition and the limited opportunities in the plantation colony did not permit him to realize his dream. Hence, he wished his son V. S. Naipaul to cherish the idea of a writing vocation. For Naipaul, their colonial island was not suitable to pursue that kind of vocation. Therefore, it was necessary to get away, since the wish to be a writer and the literature that had given him the wish, “came from another world, far away from [their] own” (LO, 2003: 106).

One of the most important aspects of postcolonial writing is the emergence of migrant writers from the former colonies. These writers tend to formulate new spaces of identities. Most of these migrant writers have (re)located themselves in the metropolitan centers of the world, mostly in the UK and the USA, mainly after the World War II, as an ever-growing literary diaspora. These writers have produced a type of literature that deals with burning postcolonial issues such as — migration, exile, displacement, ethno-cultural hybridity, marginality, sexuality, homogenization, homelessness and loss/crisis of identity etc. As stated before, the postcolonial migrant writers including V. S. Naipaul, who, in spite of their personal, cultural, linguistic and artistic differences, share one common similarity: the experience of diaspora.

Etymologically, the word ‘diaspora’ is derived from the Greek word *diasperien* which means ‘to scatter across.’ The term also has a religious connection as it refers to the dispersal of the Jews from Palestine. In the contemporary discourse, it is used as an umbrella term to refer to the “displaced communities of people who have been dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile” (Braziel and Mannur, 2003: 1). An attempt has been made in this study to show how the migrant people suffer from the problems of alienation and identity crisis in a diasporic space.

Migration, diaspora, displacement and problem of identity are major issues in contemporary cultural discourse. The uprooting and dispersal of people from former colonies
to various parts of the world and especially to the metropolitan centers, have given new meanings to the idea of diaspora. Thus, the narratives of migrancy and diaspora provide enough productive space for postcolonial ‘resistance’ with the (dis)location of postcolonial intellectuals in the metropolitan centers of the world. The narratives of migrancy and diaspora, as part of the metropolitan discourse, in Homi Bhabha’s phrase, substantiates the idea of the ‘in-between’ or the ‘liminal’ in the diasporic space. Hence, lately, some writers of colonial background try to display through their work, the nature of their diasporic identity which is often paradoxical. V. S. Naipaul is one such writer who, being in voluntary exile in metropolitan London, tries to (re)locate himself and (re)construct his identity. However, the fact is that, by attempting to erase his past, he makes futile attempts to identify and to place himself not only in metropolitan England but also in Trinidad, his place of birth and then in India, his ancestral country. To use Bhabha’s term, he is rather trapped in ‘in-determinacy’ or ‘in-betweenness.’ Or, we might say, he transcends ambivalence and therefore, becomes diasperactive. For example, in Naipaul’s The Mimic Men (1967), the protagonist Ralph Ranjit Kripal Singh is a character who feels himself ‘shipwrecked’ not only in his own island Isabella but also in metropolitan London. Ralph Singh, in many aspects, resembles Naipaul. As an exile in London, his position and identity constantly vacillates and he finds himself homeless and placeless in that indeterminate zone. This ‘in-betweenness’ works as a metaphor for place/non-place, border/borderless, home/homeless, identity/non-identity in postcolonial situation. Critics opine that the discourse of migrancy and diaspora in postcolonial/postmodern studies which emphasize mostly the mental or psychological process of migration, ‘dematerialize’ the migrant into an ‘abstract’ thing. The individual, thus, has a sense of either multiple belonging or non-belonging, and this happens due to the ceaseless movement of people (labour), capital and (information) technology in this age of
globalization and late capitalism. Therefore, it becomes difficult to attach and identify someone to a particular/fixed identity and culture.

In his essay “Minimal Selves,” Stuart Hall, while sharing his own sense of identity as a migrant in a postmodern concept, says that, it (identity) always depends on the idea of being a migrant and the idea of difference from the rest in one’s self. So, in the postcolonial or postmodern age, while the people feel themselves dispersed, the migrant ironically finds himself/herself centered. For the postcolonial migrant, centering implicates locating himself or herself in the imperial capital in Western metropolis which he/she believes to be the center of learning, power, science and civilization. As a member of the black diaspora in England, Hall, himself finds this migranthood as a kind of “coming home” (Baker et al, 1996: 114). It is a puzzling fact that, though the black people in London are marginalized, fragmented, unenfranchized, disadvantaged, and dispersed, yet, they look as if they own the territory (Baker et al, 1996: 114). The fact is that, ironically enough, despite every other deprivation, they are ‘centered’ and occupied a new kind of ‘space’ at the center. One has to wonder about the identity of these (black) people in this migrant situation where it is both impossible and absurd for them to lay claim on certain portions of the earth which is not theirs.

Hall argues that every migrant has to face a twofold question: “Why are you here?” and “when are you going back home?” Interestingly, no migrant can ever answer to the second question. The migrant, however, knows in his/her deep sense, that it is impossible to go back. As quoted from Hall in the beginning of this chapter, who observes that — “migration is a one-way trip and there is no “home” to go back to” (Baker et al, 1996: 115). In fact, says Hall, there never was any home. Even for Hall, there is no proper answer to the first question either — one may however, say that he/she has migrated for ‘education,’ for ‘children’s sake,’ for ‘better life and opportunities’ etc. Hall, however, discloses the truth saying that “I am here because it’s where my family is not. I really came here to get away
from . . .” (Baker et al, 1996: 115). This is the universal story of life, as Hall observes: one is where one is to try and get away from somewhere else. To be here is not to be there. For some, it may be to get away from his mother (as Hall did), which he terms as an “endless evasion of patriarchal family life” (Baker et al, 1996: 115), and for others, it may be for better life and opportunities when someone feels himself/herself ‘shipwrecked’ in his/her place as it happens in the case of Naipaul.

For Naipaul, the transplanted British island in which he was born, was very small — for him, it was “unimportant” and “only a dot on the map of the world” (TMP, 2001: 36). Hence, their interest was all in the outside world, since their little world of remembered India was disintegrating and fading away from their memories with the passing of time. They were being slowly swallowed up by the creolized colonial society of Trinidad. Their life within the community and within the section of their extended family had always been unsettled. From such a world, Naipaul always wanted to escape; wanted to get away from the place where they felt that they have been ‘shipwrecked.’ Perhaps, the geographical smallness of their island, together with the smallness of their own community, has created a sense of alienation in them. Thus, the desire to get away becomes possible only through the colonizer’s language and education. A hard-won scholarship ultimately had taken him out of the ‘shipwrecked’ island when he decided to go to Oxford to study English literature. However, this journey to England was not for a degree, it was only to get away. In his essay “Reading and Writing” published in a collection of essays under the title Literary Occasions (2003), Naipaul says:

> I decided to go to Oxford and do the three-year English course. I didn’t do this for the sake of Oxford and the English course; I knew little enough about either. I did it mainly to get away to the bigger world and give myself time to live up to my fantasy and become a writer. (LO, 2004: 12)
In another essay “Prologue to an Autobiography” published in the same collection, Naipaul repeats the same: “I decided to use mine [scholarship] to do English at Oxford. I didn’t want a degree; I wanted only to get away . . .” (LO, 2004: 77).

The migration of Naipaul’s grandparents had been a kind of compulsion, and not wholly voluntary as these people had accepted this transplantation for their survival. More importantly, in this transfer of population from one part of the empire to the other, the involvement of the colonizer’s interest cannot be ignored. For example, the Indian indentured labourers who were transplanted and juxtaposed with the African Negro slaves (who were set free after the abolition of slavery) in the New World, was done for the interest of the colonizers who needed cheap labour for the plantations in the British colonies. It, however, had calamitous effect of cultural translocation through geographical transplantation on these uprooted people. Hence, these migrants are unquestionably the victims of colonization. On the other hand, unlike his forefathers, Naipaul’s is a kind of voluntary exile in order to locate himself in a larger world. Naipaul is doubly displaced; for example, the first is through his ancestral migration and the second is his own migration to the metropolitan ‘centre’ of the world for better life and opportunities.

From his very childhood, Naipaul had the wish to be a writer, the wish that came from his father. The colonial disorder, racial prejudices and lack of opportunities, together with the climatic ‘unpleasantness’ of the island have compelled him to escape to a world that he cherished in his heart, a place which they believed to be the source of all knowledge and books that they handled in their island. They, as migrants, had been leading an unsettled life where, as Naipaul says, it was difficult to pursue a writing vocation. He wished to be a writer, yet, he could not be the one like a metropolitan writer. Unlike the metropolitan writers, he had no knowledge of the past since the past of their community ended abruptly with their grandfathers and beyond that they could not see (LO, 2004: 20).
Moreover, in his essay “Conrad’s Darkness and Mine,” Naipaul regrets that “the great novelists wrote about highly organized societies [and he] had no such society” (LO, 2004: 168). Hence, “to become a writer, that noble thing,” Naipaul “had thought it necessary to leave” (LO, 2004: 79). He leaves his island for London at the age of eighteen in the year 1950 and since then, he has been living in England. For, Naipaul as a migrant, who becomes one of the greatest writers in English literature in contemporary era, his migration, as Hall has pointed out, is a ‘one way trip’ and there is no ‘home’ for him to go back to. Like any other migrant, he is unable to attach himself neither to the country of his birth, Trinidad nor to the country of his ancestors, India which he considers to be a public toilet. He writes in his first Indian travelogue — “Indians defecate everywhere. They defecate, mostly, beside the railway tracks. But they also defecate on the beaches; they defecate on the hills; they defecate on the river banks, they defecate on the streets; they never look for cover.” (AAD, 2002: 70)

The migrant writers being uprooted from their cultural and ethnic origins, yet struggling in between the cultural root or past and the diasporic location, have assumed a kind of cultural plurality, in the place of ‘hybridity’ where, in Bhabha’s terms, they are destined to suffer from an acute sense of ‘un-homeliness’ or ‘in-betweenness.’ Thus, migration or displacement, location of culture and search for identity are the main issues or themes in the works of these writers. Naipaul’s works, like most of his contemporary writers of literary diaspora, deal with such burning postcolonial issues. His works which comprise of fiction, non-fiction and a number of genre-defying books convey the message of the problems of (re)location, alienation, marginalization, homelessness and identity of the postcolonial migrant and his perpetual struggle for existence. The migrant or the exiled becomes stranded in that space, a limbo of non-belonging, which may be called, again in Bhabha’s term, as the ‘third space’ where he is in a constant struggle to assert/locate his culture and identity. Among other important themes in Naipaul’s non-fictional works of non-
Arab Muslim and sub-continental settings are: first, converted Muslims in the non-Arab world suffer from identity crisis since they have erased their past with their conversion to the ‘imported’ Arab faith (a detailed discussion on the issue of identity of the converted people is carried in chapter II) and due to the ‘colonization’ that had come with that Arab faith; second, the migrant and the marginalized people suffer from insecurity and identity crisis amidst the alien and dominant class of people respectively.

Most of Naipaul characters are either uprooted migrants or alienated outsiders who are trapped in the labyrinth of displacement and multiple identities. The protagonists who are often in the guise of the writing self are mostly members of marginalized communities whose colonial background, together with self-imposed exile or migration, have resulted in their uncertainties of ‘place’ and ‘identity.’ More so, for some ambitious ones like Naipaul himself, it is a journey from the “periphery to the center” (TWW, 2003: 507) for a writing career and for a larger metropolitan audience.

Naipaul has authored no less than thirty books comprising of both fiction and non-fiction. Yet a number of his books cannot be strictly placed under a particular genre since his fictional writings abound in journalistic reportages while his non-fictional writings are marked with significant fictional elements as he allows his characters to speak out their own stories which are notably managed or reshaped and fabricated by the author himself. There are a number of Naipaul critics who designate his non-fictional works as “non-fiction novel” (cited in Khan, 1998: 6) with elements of both fiction and journalism that became popular in the late twentieth century as a popular genre. It is worth mentioning that throughout his career, Naipaul has engaged himself in search of a proper form of writing. His early works display a West Indian style of English, a kind of creolized English — suitable for the theme, location and plot of those early works. But, since the late 70s, he has been experimenting on a different style which can be termed as fictional journalism in most of his travel writings.
In his long writing career covering a span of almost six decades, as he his productive
till today, Naipaul has received a number of prizes and honors which includes the highest and
the most prestigious Nobel Prize for literature in 2001, are listed as under:

- 1961: Somerset Maugham Award.
- 1964: Hawthornden Prize.
- 1968: W. H. Smith Award.
- 1971: Booker Prize.
- 1983: Jerusalem Prize.
- 1990: Knighted by the British Queen (Naipaul does not use it); Awarded Trinity Cross.
- 1993: David Cohen British Literature Prize.
- 2001: Nobel Prize for Literature.

There are plenty of scholarly works already done on Naipaul which mainly focus on
his journey for the making of a writer, his exile and homelessness, and his quest for order and
identity. One of the first critics of Naipaul, Landeg White, in her book *V. S. Naipaul: A
Critical Introduction* (1975), explores the development of a young writer at his early forties
whose whole career is centered on the uncertainties of his own position as a migrant in
London, his struggle against the problems of displacement and homelessness. In another
scholarly work *Naipaul’s Truth: The Making of a Writer* (2001), Lillian Feder explores
Naipaul’s commitment as an author who delivers the ‘truth’ by writing extensively about the
enduring economic, cultural and psychological effects of colonialism and its subsequent
impact on human identity. But, Feder’s work sounds more as a literary biography which
analyses different genres of Naipaul’s writings and his making of a literary genius. N.
Ramadevi, in her book *The Novels of V. S. Naipaul: Quest for Order and Identity* (1996),
analyses Naipaul’s quest for identity and order, mainly in his novels of colonial or ‘Third World’ setting. Her work also focuses on Naipaul’s creative writing which traces the historical and psychological causes of futility, disorder and his quest for identity in the postcolonial world. In her seminal work *V. S. Naipaul* (1995), Fawzia Mustafa explores the major works of V. S. Naipaul, starting with *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) to *A Way in the World* (1994), where she addresses literary, historical, political and cultural issues. In this introductory critical work, Mustafa neatly examines various postcolonial issues and introduces general debates about postcolonial literary production and its narrative techniques, language, gender, race, class and canon formation. In the non-fictional arena, particularly Naipaul’s three Indian travelogues — *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), Namrata R. Mahanta tries to explore the diasporic consciousness in Naipaul and his problematic equation with India in her acclaimed work *V. S. Naipaul: The Indian Trilogy* (2004). However, not much work is done on the issue of migrant’s identity and most importantly, on the identity and existence of the converted peoples in the non-Arab Muslim world and in the Indian subcontinent.

The present study, however, attempts to go beyond the surface level of postcolonial crises of disorder, homelessness, alienation and identity crisis. Attempt has been made to negotiate the problems of migrancy and identity with special reference to Naipaul’s non-fictional works. This study therefore, aims to argue mainly on three important issues: (1) problems of migrancy and its subsequent effects resulting into identity crisis, alienation, homelessness and ambivalence of one’s existence; (2) identity and role of the converted peoples in the non-Arab Muslim world who are alleged to be leading a life of double moral standard and who are said to be doubly removed from their origin, culture and identity; and (3) civilizational issues of whether to accept the West as a ‘universal civilization’ and how Naipaul responds to other civilizations, particularly the civilization of Islam.
WORKS CITED


