

CONCLUSION

The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it. (Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*)

This is an airport. It works.... That is what I must see. (Naipaul, *Magic Seeds*)

The two worlds coexisted. It was foolish to pretend otherwise. (Naipaul, *Magic Seeds*)

This dissertation shows that all human subjects oscillate between various spaces of belonging. Space may be real as well as imagined. Space may be a physical or conceptual given but it is imbued with meaning and significance socially. Like Soja one has to agree that in the right contexts, the material space and the ideational space are socially produced and reproduced. Bhabha's third Space is an alternative that blurs the limitation of boundaries and opens up new possibilities.

Chapter 1 titled "Framing Postcolonial Subject Positions: From Mimicry to Mutation," shows that in postcolonial discourse, strict polarization of binaries has been challenged through a preference for cultural negotiations in a liminal space. This space challenges rigid separation between binary opposites and opens up possibilities of plural and border-crossing identities. Discourses of hybridity and diaspora also open up sites of transaction between colonizer and the colonized. Interaction and interrelation between colonizer and the colonized questions essentialized notions of such identity formations. Hybridisation of identity results from negotiations between different subject positions which also questions the very basis of cultural binarism.

In the colonial discourse the cultural politics centred around the binary of colonizer/colonized is premised on the notion of inclusion/exclusion, belonging/non-belonging. It can be stated that the colonizer/colonized encounter is multi-directional which challenges any rigid structure based on the polarization. The colonizer/colonized relationship is influenced by manifold considerations including race, class, generation, geographical locale which open up possibilities of plural and border-crossing identities.

New cultural alignments and assimilation of the foreign and the native lead to hybridization of culture and identity that stands as a rejection of "pure" cultural forms. Massive increase in

migrations, both within and between continents, produces new cultural transactions that facilitate new forms of cultural hybridity.

The temporal, contractual space which works through polarities, challenges essentialist notions of identity. It is not the promise of resolution of conflicts and tensions among cultures, but the intervention, ‘discursive temporality’, and negotiation of contradictory subject positions that characterize the space. This space is marked by a temporality of transaction between binary opposites. Both ideological positions and the material reality curiously posit postcolonial subjects in the contractual space.

Chapter 2, titled “Unlocking the Dispossessed: *The Mystic Masseur*, *Miguel Street* And *A Flag On The Island*,” shows the predicament of dispossession, identity crisis, mimicry and inferiority as reflected in Naipaul’s *The Mystic Masseur*, *Miguel Street* and *A Flag on the Island*. To compensate for the loss of their ancestral homeland, the Trinidad Indians make efforts to re-create an imaginary India in the alien landscape. In the condition of migrancy, ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ are mingled in such a way that they no longer remain merely as fixed geographical locations. They are always in a constant process of appropriation and negotiation that makes up the diasporic subjects. The concept of ‘home’ undergoes a process of change. It is increasingly considered as a construct of the imagination.

All the three works discussed in this chapter reflect pain and dispossession of colonized subjects. Their societies do not provide them any real alternatives to liberate themselves from the sense of insecurity and inferiority. Most of them live in a state of being unanchored—expressing an inability either to escape or to adjust with their immediate surroundings. The chapter also shows that as the diasporas belong to diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, they cannot be easily homogenized.

However, unlike Bhabha who regards colonial mimicry as a site of resistance, Naipaul represents mimicry as a sign of inferiority on the part of the colonized. There is hardly any room for appropriation and resistance. In *The Mystic Masseur*, Ganesh does not employ mimicry through language to camouflage protest and hatred against the colonizing culture. It is not a strategy to undermine the colonizing culture through mockery and ‘menace’. Rather, it is a technique to enter a class seeking importance and recognition.

In *Miguel Street*, the characters are shown to live in a world without any purpose, in the midst of humiliations and failure rather than achievement. There is no spiritual bond between man and the landscape; the predicament of the characters is the result of a psychological inadequacy produced by the colonial situation. The impoverished colonial society provides little opportunity to fulfill any dream and to assert one's identity. Changing of roles and mimicry among the inhabitants is self-defeating as it alienates them further from the surrounding environment.

Alienated from the landscape, the only option left to the inhabitants is to imitate other cultures, other values. There is no national consciousness among them and they lead their lives without any purpose. It is a conglomeration of people from different social, cultural and racial backgrounds. Their pointless actions can be viewed as outer manifestations of inner fragmentation. There is no strong social bond among the inhabitants. The burden of a borrowed culture debars them from engaging with their surroundings in a rational way. They are always in search of finding ways to escape from reality. The peripheral figures in this work are shown without any hope of better prospects. They are the products of a static, stunted colonized society. As they are alienated from their environment, their actions appear incongruous, fruitless. Their lives become directionless—an aimless drifting in search of meaning and stability.

Just as the colonized people internalize inferiority complex, they also inculcate positive virtues for the white world. They develop a psychological inadequacy as they begin to see the white world as complete and ordered. The homogenization of the white world may be attributed to some timeless, unchanging notion of racism. The superiority of the whites is constructed not only through the projection of backwardness and inferiority of the colonized but also through an effacement of differences of gender, class etc. The superiority which the whites inculcate in opposition to the black debars the former from trying to share and assimilate with the colonized.

A Flag on the Island depicts the dilemmas of immigrants due to the erosion of their traditional structures. The stories deal with the disintegration of Hindu family in the face of multicultural forms of life in Trinidad, life of meagre opportunities, life in the colonial school, ambition thwarted due to poverty. The stories present the lives of the colonials ironically, reflecting their peripheral existence in an alien world. Heterogeneity of interests

and identities contests the construction of a homogenized community. Such a hybrid society opens up the possibility of thinking beyond stable notions of identity based on ideas of racial, cultural and national purity. In the island, the black feller selling coconut is suggestive of hybrid identity resulting from inter-racial and cultural transactions.

Naipaul deals with the dilemmas of a hybrid colonial existence. The stories metaphorically deal with larger issues of domination and occupation of space by powerful outsiders which lead to frustration and hopelessness of original inhabitants of a given territory. The unanchored residents are afflicted by a sense of inferiority which is the product of a static postcolonial society.

Chapter 3, titled “Reading Hybridity: *The Suffrage of Elvira* and *A House for Mr Biswas*,” shows the disintegration of the society of Indian immigrants under the influence of borrowed culture, of mimicry and hybridity. The two novels explore new cultural negotiation resulting from multicultural mixing of displaced individuals in changed geographical and cultural spaces. As these people are displaced from their homeland, their pasts can be revisited and realized only in partial and fragmented ways. ‘Home’ and ‘Abroad’ are mingled in such ways that they no longer remain merely as fixed geographical locations.

In *The Suffrage of Elvira* Naipaul mocks at the political transformation of Elvira and offers an elaborate view of the corrupting influence of democracy. The Chapter shows how politics in Elvira is mixed with racism, religion, superstition, greed. Exploitation, corruption, bribery, tricks and cunningness are well defined in this novel. The “crazily mixed up” socio cultural situation in multi-racial Elvira represents Trinidadian hybridity. The examples of religious hybridization, attest to the religious rigidity and fluidity in the novel. The comic role playing of the characters in their public life is shown as Naipaul’s critique of colonial mimicry. The Chapter shows how aspects of the familiar indoor world are suppressed or partially presented in the ‘public,’ leading to the construction of a hybrid subject. The dispossessed individuals try to construct for themselves a separate hybrid identity. The elections bring them together for a while but for the major part they are burdened by a borrowed culture, mimicry and psychological dependency.

A House for Mr. Biswas deals with the identity crisis of rootless Indian immigrants in the colonial world. The Chapter shows how Naipaul deals with the issues of shifting identities, dislocation of roots and changing realities of the Indian migrants in the multicultural and

multiracial society of Trinidad. As a result of the process of assimilation and the impact of the west-oriented culture in Trinidad, certain aspects of Hindu culture take new forms that share aspects of both the cultures which ultimately lead to cultural hybridity.

Mr Biswas is caught in a dilemma between the abstract world of writing and the world of practical activity. He strives to achieve an order and meaning in life through the act of writing. But as his material reality remains unchanged he still continues to be unanchored and alienated. In him we find a constant oscillation between the realms of mental and physical, abstract and the concrete. The abstract world of words fails to provide him the much needed security, solidity and meaning in life.

Naipaul deals with the plurality and diversity of ways in which dispossessed individuals live, narrate and strive to make sense of their lives. Most of the characters in his novels are heterogeneous and they approach their ethnically diverse origins in the *in-between* spaces. The spaces where these characters try to make sense of their present are in a constant process of transformation and change. These individuals fail to connect with the cultural heritage of their ancestors because they have been dislocated from their roots. Moreover, they cannot develop the sense of belonging to the adopted culture in the new environment.

The chapter shows how the displaced individuals constantly produce and reproduce themselves and problematize in different ways the spaces they inhabit and the relations they develop. It shows that Space and identity undergo constant processes of revision, redefinition and change. Then again, the spaces are constantly contested and negotiated as new spaces emerge, reflecting the fluidity and hybridity of their existing conditions. Thus, the constant pull of hybridity dismantles unitary assumptions of essential subject positions. Most of the characters oscillate between different positions thereby making it impossible for people to sustain any fixed notions of identity. The coming together of people from different regions facilitates cultural and racial hybridization. The continuous cultural negotiations thus question fixity of identity and purity of any culture.

Chapter 4, titled “Alienating Geographies: *Mr Stone and the Knights’ Companion* and *The Enigma of Arrival*” shows how alienation and a sense of exile are consequences of migration and displacement. The chapter shows that in Naipaul’s fiction, the solitary and unsheltered condition of the displaced individuals creates a sense of estrangement and nothingness which is common in postcolonial writing. The loss of home creates a disintegrating effect on mind

and spirit. The illusory world they create in the mind to compensate the sense of loss does not always help to mitigate the sufferings of dislocation. The exilic condition of the 'migrants' is no longer just a product of geographical displacement; it has psychological and spiritual effects.

The chapter brings out the existential problems of loneliness, alienation, the futility of human existence and struggle for adjustment in an unfavourable world in *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion*. Mr. Stone's post retirement projects get derailed through misplaced confidences and corruption of others. The chapter shows Naipaul's disappointment with the England of his expectations through the predicament of the characters in both the novels. The novel records Naipaul's serious engagement with the pains of being unanchored, paradox of freedom, the process of change and decay, his own sense of loss and alienation.

The chapter shows that in *The Enigma of Arrival*, the characters, through their dress and behavior, want to give an impression of security. In reality, however, they are insecure to the core. They live with the idea of transitoriness, without any definite plan for the future. Although their anxiety of alienation arises from different sources (than those of their parents) they also share certain common uncertainties. A complex interweaving of alienated individuals from both "centre" and "margin" opens up the possibility of reworking of fundamental binary divisions constructed between European and non-European.

The work turns out to be a deeper philosophical meditation on transitoriness, meaninglessness and decay. Nothing is as permanent and secure as it appeared. As a stranger, he developed the idea of an unchanging state of the country life. But slowly, through his observations and experiences the narrator comes to realize that his idea of permanence and security was wrong.

Chapter 5, titled "In Contested Spaces: *A Bend in the River*, *The Mimic Men* and *Guerrillas*," deals with contested *in-between* spaces of cultural ambivalence in Naipaul's novels. The seamlessness of space results in a socio-political fabric which discourages any attempt at upholding an inherited order which is homogenous at the same time. As space ceases to withstand outside influences, identities connected to it become fluid, unstable or multiform.

Human subjects develop their sense of being and becoming in relation to the interconnected space, which they experience or are excluded from. Migrants and transnational people assert

simultaneous belonging in various communities, and they assert their identities through negotiation of contested spaces and multiple ‘political’ representations of their existence.

Ralph Singh, the narrator of *The Mimic Men*, tries to impose order on his life, reconstruct his identity, and forge a meaningful relationship with himself and his surroundings. In the novel, the seemingly coherent and ‘real’ world of London is projected against the disorder and unreality of Isabella. London stands for security, order, reality and authenticity. On the contrary, Isabella stands for disorder and powerlessness. However, the materiality of lived experience challenges the essentializing tendencies that go into the making of “centre” and “periphery” as binary opposites. The relationship between the individuals and society is necessarily a mixture of the imaginary and the real, resulting in an ambivalent attitude to both of them. The construction of identity is determined by this ambivalent cultural space.

The chapter shows that in *A Bend in the River*, Salim’s desire to cut loose takes him towards uncertainty and physical discomfort. The migrant settlers in the newly independent African countries remain at the mercy of the new rulers. With a fresh round of racial and ethnic profiling in the aftermath of colonialism, people who can claim their ancestry in that land to only a few generations are forced to contend with the dominion of the so-called local forces. What was home to the migrants has ceased to be so after the new government takes over. Salim’s subject position is constructed from different sources and many locations. This challenges the fixed notions of national, cultural, and racial purity and question the notion of subjectivity as stable and pure. The sense of selfhood of the diasporas is perceived through negotiation rather than assertion of a stable identity.

The novels of Naipaul deal with plurality and diversity of ways in which dispossessed individuals live, narrate and strive to make sense of their lives. They represent displaced individuals who constantly produce and reinvent themselves and problematise in different ways the spaces they inhabit and the relations they develop.

Guerillas exposes poverty, waste and chaos in post-colonial Caribbean. This sense of dereliction is felt by all the characters of the novel. The novel contributes to the sense of identity as heterogeneous and diverse and always in a process of mediation and reconfiguration. The contested spaces presented in this novel are the result of the dialogic relation between the real and the imagined, physical and the psychological. This overlapping of spaces facilitates an environment where the traditional ideas of rootedness and fixity are

replaced by multiple belongingness and the centre of reality is displaced by multiplicity of reality. Such crisscrossing of spaces produce malleable identities and question all fabricated notions in the construction of essential subject positions.

The chapter shows that the social spaces they are made to inhabit are characterized by a constant process of hybridization and negotiation of identities. The constant negotiation in the contested social spaces questions the concept of a stable homogenous identity. A geographical territory plays a crucial role in the formation of a person's identity. However, constant cultural interventions challenge the myth of places having fixed immutable identities. So, a geographical territory does not stand for only one absolute notion. It is characterized by plurality of vision, coexistence of diverse ways of life, multiple identities. A place is not simply a physical location, a material reality. It is also a product of the imagination.

The concept of space portrayed in the novels is larger than the mere geographical locations. The novels exemplify imaginative crossing of geographical borders in an attempt to trace one's roots. The Chapter shows contested spaces in the novels where the real and the metaphoric, literal and the symbolic interact and negotiate.

Chapter Six titled "In a Contractual Space: *A Way in the World, In a Free State, Half a Life and Magic Seeds,*" shows how identities are negotiated in the contractual space where different subject positions perpetually interrogate and challenge any essential form of identity from emerging. This negotiation intervenes in the process of essential identity formation and reveals intimacy and interrelation between polarized categories. But this comingling does not produce a new site where all contradictions and antagonisms are resolved. Each position is determined by other positions. It is this interconnection of positions that questions essential notions of identity. Thus, the contractual space is marked by ambivalence and contradiction where binary opposites no longer remain separate. Rather, as shown in the chapter, it produces complex forms of representation that question the constructed nature of binary patterning.

In a Free State shows the floating lives of homeless migrants who live in a fractured world. They are in a "free state" in the sense that they are free from the control imposed upon people by one's native country. However, their freedom is also a paradoxical one as they remain uprooted and unanchored and are living a life of exile.

The shift from colonialism to neo-colonialism gives rise to new ways of exploitation, new types of power politics and new forms of tyranny. The novel also exemplifies the transformation of relation between the colonized and the ex-colonials, whose intrusion in the ex-colonies as administrator provides ample scope to consider the colonizer/colonized relationship in a different light which is still oppositional/relational.

The contractual space is marked by a temporality where past and present, real and fantasy, are juxtaposed in peculiar ways resulting in the construction of multiple subject positions. The novel also shows how power politics and the tyranny and oppression exercised by indigenous rulers unleash threat and violence on outsiders and non-natives. In traditional colonial encounter narratives, only the colonized are presented as victims. But the colonial encounter cannot easily be simplified as a unidirectional will to power. The relationship between the two is one of interaction, negotiation and transaction leading to hybridization/contamination of both the cultures.

Colonial rule and resistance cannot be situated in an unproblematic ground. It is constantly destabilized by multiple subject positions. It is the position of in-betweenness that questions the binary logic of colonial discourse. In *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* Willie's life in London and Africa could not provide him with either a sense of belonging or a stable identity. In Africa, Willie remains a stranger, just as in India and London. The predicament of loss of selfhood and identity is a product of colonization which afflicted not only the colonized but also the colonizers.

It is the copresence of real and imaginary that produces a sense of temporality in Willie's position as a subject. The combination of fantasy and reality does not offer any clarity of vision. Rather it defers endlessly the possibility of the "ideal".

Meaning and identity are contested in an *in-between* space where fact and fantasy mingle in peculiar ways resulting in intervention of essential subject positions. In a given context, a specific subject position may appear ideal and real. But the very next moment it may lose its seeming coherence and stability due to the presence of other positions. What matters most, is how and why, in a given situation, a specific subject position takes shape, acquires a seeming fixity and ideality, and configures with other positions.

Identity is constructed in the fluid *in-between* space where all notions of identity and belonging cross borders. Such border crossings produce mutant forms of representation that deny dominant narratives of identity and belonging. The fluid *in between* space facilitates transformation and the traditional rigid models of identity categories are dissolved giving way to new ways to define ourselves. Subject positions keep evolving in different cultural climates. However, there is no pre-given ultimate reality which can be objectively known. Reality is always mediated by culturally constructed representations.

The role of ideology in colonial and postcolonial studies needs to be re-examined. There are millions of people who were annihilated through racial discrimination, uprooted from their homelands, people victims of Indenture. So to reduce such a vast history of pain and dispossession into footprints of ideological will be unjust. It is necessary to note that ideology controls and is controlled by the material world. The material world is shaped by history.

History is shaped by contested spaces and contractual spaces where human beings operate both as victims and victors, as masters and slaves, as active and passive. In any case, human beings appropriate roles of participants, agents, witnesses and interpreters of the same set of events. So any claim to purity and closure of any kind is simply untenable.

Naipaul's fiction conceives of identities as fluid, heterogenous, fragmented, always changing. In given historical contexts, cultural negotiations produce provisional truths which may appear to be fixed for a brief moment.

It is a sign of the times that Naipaul looks at the mutating forms as enabling and transforming in his latest novels. Naipaul, however, shows that new cultural truths produced through transactions are attractive and vulnerable. There are no magic seeds, and the Joycean solution of exile, cunning and silence is the beginning, not the end.