

Chapter 1

Introduction: V.S. Naipaul and Writing in the Diaspora

The Context: Naipaul as a Diasporic Writer

V.S. Naipaul (in full Sir Vidiadhar Suraj Prasad Naipaul) was a Nobel Prize winning Trinidadian writer, best known for his bleak novels set in developing countries. His writing style is characterized by the use of simple but strong words. Born into family of indentured laborers and shifted from India to Trinidad, he struggled a lot in his childhood. However, he was determined to rise above the hardships of his early life and worked hard at school in order to build a better future for himself. Later he received a scholarship to study at the prestigious Oxford University. He was very confused and unsure about his future as a student at the Oxford. He tried to focus on his writing but he was not successful in his literary career. Then he worked as a broadcaster for the BBC during the late 1950s, but soon gave up this position. He was not satisfied with his own efforts in his life. He felt very lonely and depressed and suffered from a mental breakdown.

Naipaul is an eminent Trinidad born English writer, who also shares the Indian heritage. He is famous for his early comic writings and later solemn and autobiographical works. He has written over thirty fictional books in his fifty years journey of his life as a writer. He has been awarded with a number of literary prizes such as the 'The Booker Prize in 1971' and the 'T.S. Eliot Award' for his creative writing in 1986 which play a vital role in his writing career. He is an honorary doctor of St. Andrew's college and Columbia, London and Oxford. In 1990, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. Naipaul's works consist mainly of novels and short stories, but also include some that are documentary. He is a cosmopolitan writer, a fact that he himself considers to stem from his lack of roots. He was unhappy about his cultural

and spiritual poverty of Trinidad. So, he felt alienated from his home land, India and escaped to England. There he tried to search for his identity with his traditional values but he did not succeed. So, his writings reflect the dark realities of the world. His novels use different national setting but explore the personal and collective alienation experienced in new nations that are struggling to integrate their native and western colonial heritages.

In early 1960s, Naipaul published *A House for Mr. Biswas*, which is considered a milestone in his writing career. This novel is a re-imagination of his father's life as he witnessed in his childhood. The altered reduplication of his memories of his father affected him so much. So he began to confess to real and fictional version of his memories. It is a tragic comedy that explores the identity issue of Brahmin Indian. The novel can be called the right work of art which deals with the problems of isolation, frustration and negation of an individual. It tells the story of Mr. Biswas from his birth to death, each section dealing with the different phases of Mr. Biswas's life. Naipaul continued to write critically acclaimed works including *The Middle Passage*, *An Area of Darkness*, and *In a Free state and India: A Wounded Civilization*. His works are now recognized and famous at the international level and to honor his literary services and contributions. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 2001. Naipaul is a laureate of humiliation. His fictions are often autobiographical and most of the fictions carry the diasporic issues like, isolation, identity crisis, inbetweenness, the burdens of the past and the confusions of the present.

Critics on Naipaul's *Half a Life*

Various critical reviews have been done on Naipaul's novel, opening to various interpretations related to its central themes. It has been praised for its new

mould-breaking, experimental, an enquiry, reportage and invention, *Half a Life* is about Willie Somerset Chandran's quest for identity. The protagonist Willie expresses his anxiety, dislocation, rootlessness and self exile, and searches for his own identity in his life. The novel depicts his continuing banished life from India to England, England to Africa and then to Germany for rediscovering his identity; nevertheless, he loses his originality, or true identity. When he grows up and knows about his mixed originality, he starts to despise his father and his way of life. So, his father thought, "His mind is diseased. He hates me and he hates his mother, and now he's turned against himself" (47). Here, Willie's hatred for his parent's social status. His partial existence leads him to leave the homeland in search of himself. Finally, he moves to London. In London, he struggles with many hardships. He has lots of frightening experiences in London. He first travels to London, hoping to find himself there, he studies literature and tries to become a writer, but at last he finds himself trapped in uncertainty, uninterested in neither his studies nor making any effort to better himself. After facing many hardships in London, he thought, "I misjudged my father, I used to think that the world was easy for him as a brahmin and that he became a fraud out of idleness. Now I begin to understand how hard the world must have been for him" (58). He identifies there, as a young man with nothing to his name, so he promises to be a writer, drifting aimlessly. He goes in search for his identity for self-satisfaction and stability in his life, yet after spending half of his life looking for existence. He feels confused, rootlessness and dislocation in every step of his life.

Considering Naipaul's writing and addressing the protagonist, Willie Jason Cowly argues:

In sentences of great precision and balance, Naipaul reanimates the dilemmas of the late and past-colonial experiences the pathos of

marginality and exile, the fear of throwing yourself into a void, the failure of the liberated to remake their societies, the inexorable slide into ruin. (214)

As Cowley acknowledges this novel that narrates the bitter and utterly unique experiences of Willie during his stay in different places of the world. He has reflected the lives of billions of people who live in marginal places in the world with the feeling of self-exile, rootlessness, dislocation and identity crisis. The novel is an exemplary literary art which raises the voice of those people who are spending their life in different places of the world with the taste of rootlessness, self-exile, confusing mind and experience of originality loss.

Similarly, Mahender Singh in his book *A Postcolonial study of V.S. Naipaul's Half a Life* argues that Willie is creating nothing but a fake identity, which in a sense becomes hybrid:

His performance of creating identity, displays Homi Bhabha's so-called "the third space". He constructs his own subjectivity in London by learning to create his identity. The content of the third space is what Bhabha called "hybridity" through which other, non-Western-centric positions may emerge to articulate and set up "new structures of authority, new political initiative. (3)

In this way, Willie's acts for creating his identity reflects the Homi K Bhabha's concept of 'Third Space' where identities are formed, reformed and constantly in a state of becoming according to the post, position, place and authority. Mohit Ray believes that the hybridity implied in *Half a Life* stands for "the plight of those migrants who neither completely mixed up with the immigrant countries nor could they follow the traditions and beliefs of their original heritage" (127). Hybridity is

related with various problems of the people due to the dislocation and displacement from their familiar social environment and culture. Because of immigration, immigrants are compelled to assimilate the new social, cultural tradition, they have to face several plights of identity crisis in their life.

When people leave their country and travel to the foreign countries. They are in trap between two different cultures. In fact, the sense of double consciousness emerges in them. Therefore, trapping between two different cultures and identities lead them to be victim of the identity crisis and hybridity. Thus, in this study, I want to investigate the inter-relationship between identity crisis and hybridity due to the movement from one place to another. My analysis for my study does not provide a complete picture of identity crisis and hybridity, but my finding can help to draw future researchers' attention on the issues related to the diversity of identity formation, identity crisis and hybridity due to the movement of people from one place to another.

Outline of the Study

This study has been divided into three chapters which include the sub-divisions of each chapter. The first chapter of the study discusses about Naipaul, his works and his writing styles. In this chapter, he has been viewed as a diasporic writer and his novel *Half a Life* as a diasporic novel. The first section is about Naipaul and he is discussed as a diasporic writer. In the second section of this chapter, various critics' opinions and critical analysis have been done.

The second chapter discusses the concept of hybridity and in relation with place. Both print and online sources such as thesis, journals and reliable websites have been used to get the information about the study. This chapter is named as "Connecting Place and Identity in Naipaul's *Half a Life*" and it has been subdivided

into five sections. The first section has been titled as “The Concept of Hybridity,” the second as “India- A place Divided by Castism,” the third as “Africa; An Unstable and Futureless Place” the fourth as “England: A place of Hybridity” and finally, the fifth “A Sense of Place and the Crisis of Identity.”

The last chapter is titled "Locating Naipaul: A Search for Identity." This is a concluding part. The result drawn from the study has been mentioned clearly. In this chapter, Naipaul has been proved as a diasporic writer and *Half a Life* as a novel, which clearly reflects the issues of hybridity and identity crisis. The novel gives the exact description of the places and people. In the novel, most of the characters including the protagonist Willie are victims of the identity crisis and hybridity. They are suffered from homelessness and consequently they face the disintegration of identity.

Chapter 2

Connecting Place and Identity in Naipaul's *Half a Life*

The Concept of Hybridity

Hybridity is the most discussed term in postcolonial studies in the recent years. It is as much as a celebration of borderline identities as it refers to mixing of linguistic, artistic, or cultural forms and creating new transcultural forms. The term 'horticulture' refers to the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination, to form a third, or 'hybrid' species. The term has been most recently associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha. According to him, "All cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that is 'Third space of enunciation' (118). Cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, which for him makes the claim to a hierarchical purity of cultures untenable.

For Bhabha, the recognizing of the ambivalent space of cultured identity may help us to overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity in favour of the recognition of an empowering hybridity in which the cultural difference may operate as he further states:

It is significant that the productive capacities of Third space have a colonial or post colonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory... may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism as multiculturalism or the diversity of culture, but on the inscription and articulate on of culture's hybridity. (38)

In common sense, hybridity refers to a mixture. It is a cross between two separate races, plants or culture. A hybrid is something that is mixed. Hybridity is not a new cultured or hysterical phenomenon. It has been a feature of all civilizations since time

immemorial from the Sumerians through Egyptians, Greeks, Romans to the present. The word 'hybridity' was used in English since the early seventeenth century and it has become popular in the nineteenth century. Hybridization can take many forms including cultural, political, racial, social and linguistic aspects. However, while coming to the postcolonial context, it refers to a cultural breed that is the result of bringing together of people and their culture from different groups or civilizations. On the issue of hybridity, Ashcroft et al. asserts:

Hybridity occurs in the post colonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control, or when settler-invaders dispossess indigenous people and force them to 'assimilate' to new social patterns. It may also occur in later periods when patterns of immigration from the metropolitan societies and from other imperial areas of influence continue to produce complex cultural palimpsest with the post-colonized world. (183)

Hybridity is related with various problems in which people are dislocated and displaced from their knowing social environment and indigenous culture when they are obligated to assimilate to new social cultural activities.

Hybridity has received different kinds of critical views from different critics. Regarding the term, the most prominent postcolonial, diasporic critics like Homi K. Bhabha, Robert Young and Frantz Fanon advocate basically the colonial experience. It is not limited to a narrow space, but has a broader area. For Mikhail Bakhtin, it is a defining feature of the language. He states, "It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, and encounter within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness" (358). He supports the concept of

multicultural language situations and multi-vocal narratives. He prefers multicultural language situations and narratives because it is really worth to originality and reality.

Hybridity is mostly known as a post-colonial experience. It has occurred since the time of cultural mixing hundreds of years ago. Hybridization actually happens out of recognition of differences and produces something new. It indicates the creation of new transcultural forms. Hybridity is also related with colonizer and colonized people. It is associated with their independence and the mutual construction of subjectivity. It is the inbetween space that carries the burden and confusing meaning of culture. It is the result of the bringing together of people and their cultures from different parts of the world. It is related with the traumatic colonial experience of colonized people. In cultural theory, the meaning of hybridity has been extended to refer to the mixed or hyphenated identities of persons or ethnic communities.

Bhabha claims that hybridity is revaluation of the assumption and belief of colonial identity in which there may be repetition of dominant identity. According to him, "Hybridity is the sign of productivity of colonial power, it's shifting forces and fixities; process of domination through disavowal that is the production of discriminatory identities that is secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority" (112). This means that hybridity is the production of colonialism. The colonizers are more powerful to secure their identity. Colonized people lose their originality and go under the system of colonizers but they are unable to adopt the new system completely. Thus, it creates the condition of inbetweenness. Colonized people can neither adopt the colonizer's culture nor they can avoid native culture, and they become the victim of hybrid culture. So, hybridity becomes a cultural mix and creates a new form of identity. In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba cites Robert Young to define the word 'hybrid' as a cross between two different species, "A hybrid

is technically a cross between two different species therefore the term 'hybridization' evokes both the botanical notion of inter-species grafting and the 'vocabulary' of the Victorian extreme 'right' which regarded different races as different species," (145). In his opinion, hybridity is a cross between of two different species and 'hybridization' is the botanical notion of inter-species grafting.

For Bhabha, hybridity is the notion of ambivalence. For him, "ambivalence is the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized" (12). Likewise, the relationship would be ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to that of the colonizer. The complicity and resistance do exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject. She illustrates, "Ambivalence at the source of discourses on authority enables a form of subversion founded on the wound of intervention" (112). So, it can be said that the concept of ambivalence is related to hybridity.

Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin claim, "It is the in-between space that carries the burden and meaning of culture and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important" (119). There is always a gap between two cultures and these two cultures create another hybrid culture. That hybrid culture neither covers the colonized's whole original culture or the whole colonizer's culture, which creates the inbetweenness, and it can be the cause of a culture conflict. In this way, inbetweenness creates the sense of unbelongingness to a particular culture, which creates a sense of dislocation. In *Half of Life*, most of the characters like Willie, Ana, Percy Cato, and Sorojini, the sense of dislocation is felt because of their hybrid culture. They are suffering from condition of inbetweenness. Neither they can adopt the whole culture of abroad nor they can leave the whole culture of native land. They lose their wholeness somewhere.

The novel depicts the multiple effects of cultural /linguistic hybridity in the life of the protagonist, Willie. The novel opens with a question by Willie who is curious about discovering the reality behind his name and identity. He asks his father, "Why is my middle name Somerset? The boys at school having just found out, and they are mocking at me" (1). His naming after Somerset Maugham infuriates him. From his father's story, he understands his family's history, culture, heritage and roots. However, he could not accept that his second name is named after the famous English writer Somerset Maugham, who visited Willie's town in the year before Independence. Thus, he possesses a hybrid name. Throughout the novel, he is drifting without a complete and fixed identity. His half life is incomplete due to his split or half identity. His identity crisis takes place early on in his homeland, India. His inability to cope with his hybrid background alienates him from his own country and culture. Born in India to a Brahmin father and a low caste poverty-stricken mother, he is totally disgraced by his mixed parentage, feels ashamed of his hybrid identity. So, he decides to leave his family and country:

And that was how, when he was twenty, Willie Chandran, the mission - school student who had not completed his education, with no idea of what he wanted to do, except to get away from what he knew, and yet with very little idea of what lay outside what he knew, only with the fantasies of the Hollywood films of the thirties and forties that he had seen at the mission school. (51)

Due to the strained relationship with his father and to escape the shame of his mixed race, he decides to leave his indigenous country India and wants to move to London, aspiring a better life in another part of the world. For him, London seems to be an ideal place for gaining a new identity. However, there also he is nothing but gets a

fake identity which is in a sense a hybrid identity.

Willie realizes that his immigration to India to England and England to Africa had been a mistake. He always fears to lose his own language, while learning the new language of the immigrated country. In conclusion, his failure of achieving the aim behind the process of hybridity is manifested in his trails of adoption of cultures such as English and Portuguese-African. The feeling of despise that he had in India towards his ancestors, the feeling of alienation and unhomeliness in England and the feeling of identity crisis and living others life in Africa hinder him from having a full life. His sense of incompleteness and inbetweenness is his psychological burden which helps to create a sense of hybridity.

India – A Place Divided by Castism

The protagonist Willie is born and brought up in an Indian family in India. He has a hybrid identity rather than a purely Indian identity. So, his curiosity to know more about his origin and hybrid identity and cultures cause to drive him to set a journey of self-discovery in relation to the places he assumes he belongs to. He, in the opening of the novel, asks his father about the origin of his Anglo-Indian name. From this moment he enters a journey in search of his hybrid Anglo-Indian roots. He travels to and spends the time in England, Africa and India. Having lived in these different countries with different feelings, finally he gives up his quest for a place of his belonging and tries to search or invent his self-identity himself.

The novel deals with the story of South Indian Brahmin boy, who has zeal to follow Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's path by marrying to a 'backward' caste classmate which is the cause of regrets till the end of his life. The Brahmin who has broken all traditions of self-denial, for life of sacrifice, becomes aware about his marriage with an untouchable girl and blames for his bad condition on his 'backward'

caste wife. Similarly, his son Willie, also blames his parent for his failure in his life and says, "This habit of non-seeing I have got from my father" (54). He thinks he is swimming in ignorance; he has lived without knowledge of time. He hates his father and mother too, and starts to hate himself because of his misfortune to take birth in this family.

The story of Chandran family's involvement continues with castism for three generations such as his grandfather, his father and Willie himself. These generations reveal the depth and rootedness of castism system in India. Willie's father belongs to high Brahmin caste, and he is an outcast as a young college boy and always adds with the standards that the school and what his father set for him. Willie's grandfather, who decided to leave the temple in the 1890s and thought went to the big town where the Maharaja's palace was and where there was a famous temple. Finally, he was a clerk at the Maharaja's palace and his job had been secured, even though the pay was not very good. He was respected by the people. So, he wanted his son to continue the life of high caste and by engaged the daughter of the principal of the Maharaja's college. Yet, Willie's father felt detached from Maharaja's palace and determined to rebel against them. His rebellion as he notes was not informed by a thoughtful cause, but simply out of disobedience of the rules set by those who had authority over him. Thus, despite of his father's displeasure and at the cost of his scholarship to study medicine, he marries the first low-caste poverty-stricken girl whom he meets at the same school where he studies. In his own words, "Live a Life of Sacrifice" (12). His defiance unexpectedly leads him to more serious political involvement. His fight with the high caste people for his life of sacrifice creates a fraudulent case against him in the country. This fraudulent case makes him a 'holy man' who is fighting for the disadvantaged caste of untouchables.

Yet, Willie's father confesses that it is not any political agenda that gave him such a heroic role, but people who need a hero to lead their war for them, "I had wished after all, only to follow the great men of our country. Fate tossing me about had made me a hero to people who, fighting their own petty caste war, wished to pull them down" (29). He thinks that his simple life of sacrifice has taken a turn. Willie's father becomes involved politically through his fate rather than an insight into politics. Consequently, the novel suggests that the holy wars are doomed to failure of Willie's father, far from pursuing his cause contradicts his own ideas and political vision later in his life.

Willie's father gradually grows to feel ashamed of his marriage to a low caste woman and of his low support for the low-castes. He reveals, "This shame was always with me, the little happiness always at the back of my mind like an incurable illness, corrupting all my moments, all my little triumphs" (33). Despite being praised by foreign media and gaining a reputation in certain intellectual circles, he feels anxiety in his life. He also begins to feel ashamed and melancholic over his low-caste daughter, Sarojini who has the image of her mother and for him it is like "divine punishment" (35). He named his daughter after a woman poet of the independence movement, Sarojini in the hope that a similar kind of blessing might fall on her. The poet Sarojini was a great patriot and but as the daughter grows up, the father sees the image of low caste in her face and starts to hate her. The thought of equality fades away when it comes to personal experience. The social forces of castism in the country turn out to be stronger than his will to fight them. Finally, he yields to the caste values that dominate the Indian society.

Willie and Sarojini belong to the post-independent generation, and they resist such traditional Hindu values, especially castism with indifferent way to their father.

At school, Willie sees caste discriminations against a low-caste student and he experiences hierarchal social relations on a small scale. The servants of Willie's school said, "They would strive rather than serve in a school which took in backwards" (38). They reveal the depth pain of the social division based on class and caste. Willie also begins to feel the shame on his or background of his own birth as the son of a low caste mother. He also feels ashamed of his father's average job and starts to keep distance himself from his parents whom he loves. He expresses his anxiety about his family background by writing stories which reflect his troubled mind. In one of the stories he pretends to be a Canadian and going on holiday with his 'Mom' and 'Pop' (39) which reveals his inner longing for another identity and nationality. Willie's father reads the composition of him and feels ashamed while reading his writing, "But I have done him nothing he is not me. He is his mother's son. All this Mom and Pop business comes from her. She can't help it It's her background" (41). Here, Willie's father blames his wife's backwardness and low-caste origin for spoiling his children life and feels ashamed. In another story called 'Life of Sacrifice' he draws his father image implicitly. The stories, although they do not reflect his true feelings directly, they reveal the anxiety of identity and troubled mind of him.

The socio-cultural mode of India is limited to castism. Indeed, the dynamic and complex social disposition of India as a habitus is reduced in the novel to the conflict between castes and the maintenance of Indians towards their caste. To raise the voice against caste system is not common matter in the small town in the late 1940s for Willie's father. At that time, anti-imperialist movement was the burning issue throughout the country. But in *Half a Life*, anti-imperialist movements are shown as insignificant in the small cities and communities where the hegemony of caste and class was far stronger than the British imperialism.

In the Maharaja's state, imperialism was not a greater issue as the caste division. The novel shows anti-imperialism is a national movement which is completely separate from the caste struggle in small Maharaja's town. So, Willie's father is aware of his revolution against castism looks insignificant in comparison with the anti-imperialist movement in the wider political context of India. He opines, "Elsewhere in the country they were talking of Gandhi and Nehru and the British. Here in the Maharaja's state they were shut off from those politics. They were half-nationalists or quarter-nationalists or less. Their issue was the caste war" (28). Here, though political struggles received more publicity all around the country, the struggle of the caste war had a stronger root than British-imperialism in Indian's culture and history. Uprooting a tradition is shown to be far more difficult than dismissing a foreign authority in a country. It has become a real challenge to Indian people.

The idea presented in *Half a Life* the castism hinders the unity of India against oppression and corruption is not new in Naipaul's writing. Indeed, he views India as a society with several fields of difficulties such as, religion, class, caste, and colonial history. All of these complexities and the unbridgeable gap they have created in the social sphere are discussed and presented in his nonfictional trilogy, *India: An Area of Darkness* (1964), *India. A Wounded Civilization* (1977), and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990). A same kind of argument about influence of caste in Indian society was made nearly four decades earlier in *India, An Area of Darkness*, where he proclaims Indian's and Gandhi's lack of racial sense:

Race is something that they detect about others but among themes lives they know only the sub-caste, caste, the clan, the gens, the language group. Beyond that they cannot go they do not see themselves as belonging to an Indian race; the words have no meaning. (157)

Naipaul tries to prove that Indians had no national unity or sense of nationhood and that affect the notion of independence which is meaningless in India. Robert Young critiques that "Gandhi's Voluntary poverty was a strategy oriented towards the support of the peasantry and subaltern classes" (321). His view contradicts Naipaul's claims that Gandhi ignored castism and class divisions. Challenging the Naipaul's views, Vasant Patel argues that Gandhi stood against what he saw as British Snobbery against poor Indian traders and questioned such snobbery in the name of civilization. Patel defends Gandhi by arguing that his "Hind Swaraj means more than wanting the English to leave", rather he called for an unconditional cultural reform and freedom (157-158). For Nandy, "Gandhi's ideal cultural form was not a pre-colonial India; rather it was the mixing of hybrid culture" (46). For Naipaul, the complexities of caste and the lack of prospects for change are enough reasons to make India an uncomfortable habitus and an unhomely place.

Willie, at last, gives up the fighting for freedom and he moves to England. His failure in making a contribution to the reconstruction the India is not a failure of only him. It is symbolically a failure of India as well. Timothy Weiss interprets Naipaul's approach to India as an "idea" rather than observation of place, saying that for Naipaul "India is not precisely a place, but an idea, a state of mind" (18). Naipaul shows traditional forces in India not only restrict the agency of the colonial subjects for personal or national growth, but also resist transformation the corrupted and passive social and cultural system. Hence, India is a place which cannot easily be transformed, individuals should give up on the idea of belonging and can only choose their habitats. The protagonist of this novel, who has the possibility of immigrating to more dynamic and less divisional place to create his identity, India is not the best option for himself to recognize due to the different complexities of caste class in

India.

Africa – An Unstable and Futureless Place

Another place where Willie explores as a dwelling place is Africa. He meets Ana, a girl from an African country. She has a Portuguese sounding name and she is doing a course of some sort in London. When he meets her, he feels himself in the presence of someone who accepts him completely. As time passes they become lover and married. He goes with her to her large outback estate in the "half and half" world of a Portuguese colony like Mozambique, where he remains for eighteen years with her. He marries her with the hope of living comfortable family life and to search for his own-self-identity in a large homely state. To her also, his presence seems a good opportunity because she also needs "a man on the estate" (141). But neither is Africa the home he assumed nor is he the supportive man for her whom she looks for. He fails to integrate with African settlers during his stay in Africa. He starts to feel a more alienated person in Africa in comparison to London. She leads eighteen years of his life in Africa with her at last. He again takes a decision in his life to leave her with the expectation of finding his true existence.

In Africa, he loses his identity, his language and his originality. The novel states, "Willie is trying to deal with the knowledge that had come to him on the ship that his home language had almost gone, that his English was going, that he had no proper language left, no gift of expression" (132). He feels worried about the loss of his language. In Africa, he remains Ana's London man whose presence is just a means to reinforce Ana's authority (146). The high socio-economic life of the European settlers in Africa attracts him in the beginning. He feels satisfaction with parties and affairs with different women which he did not have in India and London. However, gradually he realizes that such a rich and exciting life leaves him feeling deeply

insecure and hollowness from inside. Similar sense of insecurity is shared by other settlers and immigrants in Africa. The settlers feel enjoyment of the parties and their boasting about their colonial or aristocratic post but fail to compensate for the feeling of discomfort and they are living in the shadow of an impending disaster of identity crisis. For example, the Corrias, an immigrant couple of Portuguese decent, keep their investments in bank accounts in London and Switzerland in case of war which shows the condition of insecurity in Africa.

In *Half a Life*, the life of the European settlers and other immigrant people is portrayed as a life of indulgence, insecurity, futureless and violence. Africa where Willie travels is not identified that emphasizes Naipaul's view of Africa as a homogenous and static continent. The image of violence unconsciously makes Willie violent in his relationship with Ana and his affairs with other lovers. So he says "I didn't think I could live through another war" (226). Even in his fantasies he imagines Graca having affairs with other lovers and the jealousy of those lovers give him "a sense of the brutality of the sexual life" (211). Due to the news of a guerrilla's attack and psychologically break down state he decides to leave Ana and Africa. He confesses, "You've had eighteen years of me. I mean I've given you eighteen years. I can't give you any more. I can't live your life any more. I can't to live my own" (136). He thinks in Africa he is living Ana's life so he leaves her but she stays in Africa because she has financial and emotional bonds with Africa. She is from hybrid African-European background she has a kind of half and half position. The story of her African-Portuguese family who for three generations lived in Africa and took root in the land.

Despite Ana's connections to Europe, she has a sense of belonging to Africa. Her grandfather came to Africa during 1914 when there was the great First World

War. Her grandfather had lived hard life in that hard country and knowing no other, had himself become half-African, with African family like other Europeans, he had also made a fortune in the African country. In Africa, he married an African woman and he established an estate on which he grew cotton, cashews and sisal consolidated his sense of connection with Africa. He had quite another idea of the future of his family and his name he had sent his two half-African daughters to school in Portugal, and he wanted them to marry proper Portuguese, to breed out the African inheritance. He wanted to secure his daughter life and their fortune for the future. But one girl stayed in Portugal and the other, Ana's mother came back to Africa and estate with her husband.

The mixed (African-Portuguese) identity of Ana and her fair skin, but curly hair is a symbol of her non-belonging to a particular 'race' culture, or habitat. For her, just as other settled overseers, life in Africa is intertwined with betrayal and violence. Her belonging is established through living, working and protecting the land which she inherited from her grandfather. Her husband he has lack of such kind of sense of belonging. But their difference is not only belonging of the place but also the lack of emotional bond. To her, Africa is not homely and financial bonds render the place of her belonging and she attempts to keep her family roots intact. She says, "I'm not running away. Half of what my grandfather gave me was stolen by my father. I will stay here and protect the half. I do not want people squatting in my house or sleeping in my bed" (226). The remark shows that Willie is homeless. For him, the idea of living for the sake of survival in places like Africa and India is meaningless. But for Ana, sense of belonging is established through living, working and protecting the land.

Willie's affair with other women comes to Anna as one in the stream of

betrayals to which her family has been subjected since their settling in Africa. Just as her father betrayed her mother and just as her father betrayed her by taking half of her assets. He is betraying her by sleeping with other women in her home. Her powerless in the face of his betrayal and in the face of the imminent handover of the town to guerrilla as is expressive of the settler's insecurity in the face of the insurgencies the African has undergone after independence. In spite of her wealth, trust, comfort, she has to face insider enemies like him as well as outsider enemies, like the guerrillas whose imminent haunts the settler's life.

Willie lives for eighteen years in Africa but he feels homeless, powerless and insecure there. He forgets the way of his life and loses his originality too there. He suffers from hybridity, so he expresses his confusion state on his mind, "I don't know where I am, I don't think I can pick my way back. I don't ever want this view to become familiar. I must not unpack. I must never behave as though I am staying" (135). Africa is shown to be an unhomey place due to its instability and insecurity. Indeed, Ana's insistence on staying in Africa reveals the complex way in which individuals establish a sense of belonging and place. In spite of instability and insecurity in the country, she feels responsibility for the estate which three generations of her family have cared for and which now belongs to her that shows the sense of place and belonging are quite personal and conditional matter. The novel reflects individual's affiliation to a place is conditioned by their background and their status. To her, the idea of home is not yet forgotten. Home is the place to be constructed and protected. So, she has the possibility of leaving and to live in Portugal or England which might be more secure habitats.

The unhomeliness of Africa is also the subject of Naipaul's earlier novel, *A Bend in the River* (1979). Unlike in *A Bend in the River* where the problems of the

African continent are associated with a dictatorial system, in *Half a Life* social imperative as much as political issues make Africa a degenerative habitat. Africa is unhomely because of its violent and disoriented societies. Helen Tiffin, in a reading of *A Bend in the River*, argues that the theme of the novel is 'survival' in the sense that "Africans will carry on their lives despite all" (25). She reads Salim's ultimate return to Africa in spite of losing everything to the estate, as "a signifier of survival in the world in which no person any longer has a place, a home" (28). Tiffin view has pertinence in Salim and Ana's case as they both have familial and financial bonds in Africa that make them to choose Africa as their dwelling place even though they are not at home there.

Half a Life reflects the possibilities to choose a habitat, a place where individuals can establish some kind of connection with or a prospect of a comfortable life. Having no emotional or financial bond to preserve in India or Africa, Willie chooses to settle down in a more secure, comfort society like England where he can have a prospect of a hopeful life and possibility to search for his self-identity.

England – A Place of Hybridity

On his first visit to London in the late 1950s, Willie shares a sense of alienation and loneliness as Naipaul. Both Naipaul and his character find the metropolis dull, unwelcoming and lonely. Willie finds a sense of being lonely in London. He thought, "I don't know where I am going. I am just letting the days go by. I don't like the place that's waiting for me at home" (117). Here by living in London he realizes that he is living life of vacant he has nothingness in his life. He has just spending the days without a purpose. He initially thinks the big city and his unknown as an opportunity to him to escape from the hatred of his father's -un-heroic manner and family background. In London, he begins to fictionalize his background and

fabricate a new identity for himself:

No one he met . . . know the rules of Willie's own place, and Willie began to understand that he was free to present himself as he wished. He could as it were, write his own revolution. . . . He could within reason re-marks himself and his past and his ancestor. . . . He kept his father as a Brahmin. He made his father's father a 'Courtier'. So playing with words, he began to re-make himself. It excited him, and began to give him a feeling of power. (60-61)

But this happiness of freedom over anonymity does not last long. It is replaced by a nostalgic feeling for belonging to a family or a community. Another character Percy Cato who is a Jamaican of mixed parentage and is more brown than black. He is also a scholarship student, and feels like Willie. Percy Cato also feels nostalgic towards his own country. Moreover, London is a city of immigrants and immigrants in London appear to be outsiders with no prospect of integration or of a hopeful future. Willie thinks, "Few of the immigrants had proper jobs, or secure houses to go back to. Some of them were truly on the brink, and that gave an edge to the gaiety" (72). Living in an isolated city, he also begins to develop an idealist vision of the world that existed but at that time is out of his reach: *Half a Life* ends with him still holding on to the old perception that there is a need for home.

Right before joining political activists in India, Willie feels confused where he belongs. The confusion he draws on his place of belongings reflects a view of the world as divided in two and it is as follows:

One world was ordered, settled, its wars fought, in this world without war or real danger people had been simplified. They looked at television and found their community [...] In the other world people

were more frantic. They were desperate to enter the simpler, ordered World. (10)

Based on such an outlook, India and Africa belong to the disorganized world that lack orientation and direction. As a young man, Willie thinks it is to this world that he belongs, but given the complexity of the process of change in India, he realizes that insisting on belonging to the world he hopes to change is idealistic rather than realistic. So, he chooses a habitat for himself that is England rather than looking for a place of belonging. Among India, England and Africa, he decides to live in England for a comfortable and secure life. He visits and settles in England twice in his life, once in the 1950s when he escaped from the confines of the caste system of India and when he comes to know the reality about his family's history, culture, heritage and root from his father's story. At that time, he feels he has an incomplete identity of his origin due to his father's deprivation from Brahmin culture and second time in the 1980s, after giving up his vain quest for political activism in India.

In *Magic Seeds*, another novel by Naipaul, Willie visits in London thirty years later than his first arrival and this time he begins to see the London as a new place. His second arrival is particularly interesting because not only the place has transformed from a gloomy post-war state to a multi-cultural society but also he has changed from an inexperienced man into a mature middle-aged man with knowledge of societies and places. Due to his experience rather than emotion, he returns to again London, viewing it as a habitat with its own exclusive dynamic relations and social forces. He thought, "That was how I appeared in London. That is how I appear now I am not as alone as I thought" (138). When he visits next time in London, he has changed from an unexperienced man into an experienced man. He thinks the world has changed and the best part of his life is over.

England of the 1980s appears to Willie a better habitat because the tensions and contradictions of the postwar situation seem to have resolved in such a way that a hybrid and coordinated society is created. The change in England is not in terms of the appearance or architecture. As he moves around London, he views “the same little college with mock-Gothic arches, the fearful Notting Hill squares just as thirty years ago” (195). London has a settlement of different caste, religion, or race so he notices that the human landscape of London, he sees, “Black people everywhere and Japanese; and people who looked like Arabs” (196). He realizes that poverty-stricken immigrants have developed into diasporas who have contributed to make England a multi-cultural, multi-language and mixed caste metropolis. Cultural exchange and the breakup of boundaries are new forces that postmodern and post colonial society has generated. In the new world of the metropolis, the old sense of belonging to the place of one's origin is lost. It seems that these diasporic subjects have accepted a sense that home is elusive: There are just habitats.

Willie can belong to England by adapting himself to the social and cultural imperatives of the place and the capitalist era. In England, the vibrant cosmopolitan and multicultural space is created in the metropolis. So, he no longer feels an outsider there. This process of coordination between cultures, social, individuals and places in England can be recognized as a process of hybridization. In other ways, it is the step towards hybridity that causes England in Willie's eyes a more comfortable habitat for immigrants from the former colonies. The question is raised here whether hybridity has worked well in practice in Britain, and if England has the right disposition of habitus for immigrants, just as he assumes.

Most of the people of past colonial world struggle with this unknown and uncertain freedom and ultimately they manage to create a new one for themselves, by

developing a hybrid vision. But Willie never stops his search for freedom. He lives with a sense of dilemma and unable to find any places or situation that he can find himself. In *Hybridity and Diaspora*, Kalra, Kaur and Huthyk have examined the extent to which hybridity has been implemented in Britain. According to them hybridity is "an articulation of rights and essential identities" (70). They believe in the possibility of the formation of a hybrid cultural and multi-cultural society. According to them, typologies of immigrants can form social groups which act within the legal boundaries of the states. That means while immigrants hold their ethnic affiliations they also conform to the social rules of the states. The social and cultural configuration results from the format of displacement.

Willie as a postcolonial migrant figure signifies a universal condition of hybridity. In this context, Homi K Bhabha's views on the migrant experience as a postcolonial metropolitan assimilation may be recalled, "This space of the translation of cultural difference at the interstices is infused with that temporality of the present which makes graphic a moment of transition, not merely the continue of history" (233). According to Kalra et al., inviting people to engage in cultural exchange is usually carried out within limits and boundaries of the benefit of the systems of power rather than in line with true integration. In the view of the writer, although there has been attempted to displace, cultural divisions and hybridity in practice have not truly achieved the objectives for defining it.

Bhabha argues that colonial and postcolonial cultures and social structures are created in an 'in-between' space, a space of enunciation where absolutism and hierarchy between the culture is dissolved and new forms are created (242). Britain is now recognizing the place of cultural exchange, which is conditioned by time and place, meaning that it could happen only in dynamic and stable societies like the

English society at the time of the dominance of the late capitalist culture. The novel refuses to engage with the questions that critics of hybridity have noted. Issues such as complexities of integration for the immigrants and the hegemonic power of the dominant English culture are ignored. However, hybridity is not shown as celebratory dominant cultural forces that level the hierarchies.

The novel shows that an individual's quest for home and a place of belonging the reality of homelessness causes the desire for home. Willie as an individual with a hybrid identity has to choose his habitat among India, Africa and England where he studies and flourishes his career. To him, living in a multi-cultural, multi-racial and materialist country like England would not be ideal, but it would be a better place than living in the social system, which is divided unstable and corrupt. England is shown to be a better option for him to live his life. A hybrid life in the metropolis is considered as a new way of belonging in the postcolonial and the late-capitalist era.

In the novel, the protagonist Willie has a racial and cultural mix identity. So, he is struggling to discover his identity in the multicultural society. When he reached London at first he thinks London as a solid place; however he senses that he is still in limbo as a marginalized wanderer in the big city. Such colonized, exiled, immigrants, marginalized and uprooted people must confront their being in an indefinite state of suspension. Caught up in this limbo he is an Indian immigrant, who loses not only his native cultural heritage but also his sense of place. He identifies neither with his native land and old world nor with the new world as he desires. He moves to London and drifts into Bohemian life; he feels there lost half-identify and half person without fixed root and cultural. In England, he drifts continuously. So, he states, "He still had no idea of the scale of things, no idea of historical time or even of distance" (58). He wants to discover his own identity in England but he feels alienated and dislocated

there. Finally, he moves to Africa with Ana to re-discover his identity with her.

Throughout the story, Naipaul has painted a clear picture of a man on his journey to find his identity in different countries like India, England and Africa. But at the end of the novel, his psychological breakdown reaches climax and forces him to feel his identity crisis in the entire world existence.

A Sense of Place and the Crisis of Identity

Naipaul's *Half a Life* was published in 2001 when diasporic issues have become burning issues all over the world. The novel evaluates the lives of the mixed descent in three countries - India, England and Portuguese Africa and struggle of the protagonist Willie for discovering his identity. The novel is set in three locales – India, England and Africa.

Mainly, the novel is a story of the Willie. He was born in India to a Brahmin father and poverty-stricken lower caste mother. It opens when Willie asks, "why is my middle name Somerset? The boys at school have just found out and they are making me" (1). His name after Somerset Mougham irritates him. The question about his middle name forms the very essence of a person's existence. The answer of this question brings to flight the irony of his existence and at the same time he feels he has mixed backgrounds origin with half identity in half made society with the people who are themselves leading a life which is half-discovered, half realized and half-lived.

Being the son of Brahmin, father and low caste mother, Willie's unfixed self begins since his childhood. So, he starts to pretend that he is a Canadian and writes an invented story which is based on American comic book. In his English composition he keeps himself as a Canadian boy with 'Mom' and 'Pop'. On the contrary, he has great attachment to the Eastern culture as well. In his child age, "He used such money as came his way to buy pretty things for her and the house: a bamboo-framed mirror,

a bamboo wall-stand for a vase, a nice length of block-stamped cloth, a brass vase, a painted paper-mache box from Kashmir, Crepe-paper flowers" (39). This shows his interest towards Indian goods and his affection towards his Eastern culture. But when he starts to understand more about the public in the school and about mission school, he begins to look his mother from more and more of a distance; and he becomes a confused man, he feels himself incomplete and inbetweeness. He completely dislikes his identity in his society, embarrassing of his life which is at the bottom of the society in economic status. He wants to escape from India. After living India, he travels to London and there also he finds himself being colonized, exiled, immigrants who has lost not only his native cultural heritage but also his sense of place. He identifies neither with his homeland an old world nor with the new world similar to his desires.

Willie suffers a typical isolation in London. He cannot find the way of forming relationships on his own life. He feels incompetent which made his life be hatred. He fails to attain the good position even he lost his self-identity. He has become isolated and lived confuse life in London.

When Willie meets Ana, he realizes that she is the only person who accepts him completely. He falls in love with her. He hopes that his experience of love with her may bring him a sense of fulfillment which he is seeking desperately. So, he follows her to her inherited estate, Africa for seeking his new identity. In Africa, he tries to re-invent himself and tries to discover his own identity but he starts to feel stranger and outsider. He feels more isolated, dislocated in Africa than in London there, he suffers from greater sense of alienation. He does not want to stay there. His failure to learn a language means his failure to attain his identity in a new land. So, he remains under the shadow of his wife. He has got identity in Africa as 'Ana's London

man'. His life becomes the imitation of her life. As a result, he feels that he has lost his identity and alienated more than London. He is unable to find a place for himself in Africa; he becomes nothing.

When Willie reaches half span in his life with identity crisis, he wants to emerge out of the shadow of the image of 'Ana's London man'; he wishes to escape from his confines. Finally, he expresses his desire to leave her in Africa. He confesses to her:

You've had eighteen years of me.

You really mean that you are tired of me'.

I mean I've given you eighteen years'.

I can't give you any more. I can't live your life anymore. I want to live my own'. (136)

Willie finally faces the reality by telling Ana about his isolated and alienated life in Africa and his condition of identity crisis and he needs to find his own. Having lived half a life in Africa for eighteen years, he consciously senses his "loss" in this new land after slipping "on the front steps of the estate house" (135). His self-realization of self-identity forces him to get back by leaving Ana in the hope of discovering his own true identity.

Ana has the same feeling as Willie. She has herself been leading a borrowed life. So, she says to him, "Perhaps it wasn't really my life either" (227). Finally, he decides to move to Berlin, where his sister, Sarojini lives for re-inventing his new identity. In the novel, all the characters are suffered from the dilemmas of displacement and identity crisis. As the protagonist of the novel, he has a constant banished life from India to England, England to Africa and then to Germany to rediscover his self-identity. However, he loses his original identity throughout his life.

Chapter 3

Locating Naipaul: A Search for Identity

Naipaul's *Half a Life* captures the true emotional feelings of an immigrant. It represents a number of ideas about disorientation, confusion, dread, meaninglessness and uncertain or inner exile condition of human beings due to the hybrid culture and origin. This novel deals with the protagonist Willie's sociopolitical, cultural, national, racial and ethnic situations and his relational formation of subjectivity which remain incomplete and always on the process of becoming because of different dynamic forces.

Being an Indian by ancestry, Trinidadian by birth and an Englishman by education, Naipaul possesses a multicultural and multi-geographical background. As a colonial, he wants to locate his place in the world through his literary writings. He presents colonial anxieties in his works. For him, travel is a way to understand oneself and to achieve self-knowledge. Thus, his physical journey gives echoes to his mental one. Like, in the novel, the protagonist Willie, just like Naipaul, intends to search for his self-identity and construct his own subjectivity in the world via travelling. In the beginning, Willie escapes his home land, India, and moves to England to search for his own identity like Naipaul's. After that, he goes to Africa and Germany in order to create his own place in the world. Eventually, he can courageously confront his identity loss and open up his new life in the future.

This novel seems an autobiographical work as it presents a more optimistic attitude towards the future than the previous ones when a man candidly faces dilemmas in life. He will fear nothing. Naipaul powers himself through his writing. Like his father before him he is seeking his own home in the world; he constructs home for himself through his creative writing. The novel was published in 2001 when

diasporic issues were the burning issues all over the world. The main focus on the novel is that identity crisis due to hybrid originality makes Willie frequently try to search for self-identity in his existence in this world but he has to face the situation of isolation or alienation. After living in Africa under the Ana's protection for eighteen years, he finally faces the reality of his life and tells her that he is miserable with their relationship and life due to his identity crisis. So he wants to find out his own identity and existence in this world. She agrees with him because she has been feeling as dissatisfied with her life as him. At last, they find their own separate ways, each in search for their self-identity.

The productions of hybrid identities are due to migration. Being uprooted and alienated from the country, they have experiences of difficulties in every step of life to fit them elsewhere. Thus, they start to spend their life in an ongoing quest for identity and home persistent. A search for identity is one of the prominent themes in Naipaul's novel. He writes about the psychological dilemma, which postcolonial individuals suffer while adapting to new lives in the postcolonial societies. Being the writer of diaspora, he exhibits some of the inner-related consequences of hybridity such as dislocation, alienation, rootlessness and homelessness.

The predominant theme of the novel is rootlessness and identity crisis. It depicts the feeling of displacement, insecurity and disorientation due to the social, cultural and religious environment which are not fully developed. All the characters in the novel such as Percy Cato, Marcus, Graca, Ana and Sarojini are searching for their wholeness where they cannot reach. At the end, as all the characters live their half a life, they have no choice except living with the false hopes of wholeness.

The theme of exile and longing for identity is very much central to the novel. Due to his identity crisis he remains in a state of tension, alienation and isolation. The

novel also presents different aspects of the notion of hybridity and consequences they may face. His sense of alienation and unhomeliness is the major cause of his identity crisis. In England, he realizes that his immigration to England has been a mistake. He said that he had been living here in a fool's paradise. Willie's identity is switched from one to another such as wherever he goes he gets a new identity. His identity is depended on class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, etc. It is the society, his situatedness and contingencies, which determines his identity. In the novel, he has plural and partial identity. All identities which he gets in different places are not completed in themselves.

Willie's failure of achieving the aim behind the process of hybridity is manifested in his trials of adoption of other cultures such as English and Portuguese African. The feeling of shame towards his originality in India, and the feeling of alienation and being unhomeliness in England and Africa, hinder him from having wholeness in his life. His sense of incompleteness is a psychological trauma and burden for him. It is the cause of identity crisis in his life.

Works Cited

- Aschcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts in*. Routledge, 1998.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogical Imagination*, edited by Michael Holoquist and translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holoquist. U of Texas, 1981.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Cowley, Jason. "Life after Death." *The Guardian*. 26 Aug. 2001.
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/aug/26/fiction.features2>.
- Kalra, Virinder, Raminder Kaur, and John Hunthyk. *Diaspora and Hybridity*. SAGE, 2005.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 1998.
- Naipaul, V.S. *An Area of Darkness*. Andre Deutsch, 1964.
- - -. *Half a Life*. Picador, 2001.
- - -. *Magic Seeds*. Picador, 2004.
- Nandy, Ashis. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recover of Self under Colonialism*. Oxford UP, 1983. Print.
- Patel, Vasant. *V.S. Naipaul's India: A Reflection*. Standard Publishers, 2005.
- Ray, K. Mohit. *Studies in Literature in English*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributer, 2007.
- Singh, Mahendra. *A Postcolonial Study of V.S. Naipaul's Half a Life*. *International Journal of Research*, vol. 1, no. 7, 2017, pp. 20-25.
- Tiffin, Helen. "New Concepts of Person and Place in *The Twyborn Affair* and *A Bend in the River*." *A Sense of Place in the New Literatures in English*, edited by Peggy Nightingle. U of Queensland, 1986.

Weiss, Timothy. *On the Margins: The Art of Exile in V. S. Naipaul*. U of
Massachusetts. 1992.

Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Wiley Blackwell,
2001.