

Conclusion

That Western colonialism and imperialism owe their former success and durability as much to the Europe's all-out invasion of the colonial societies as to the different world view of the colonized has been regularly pointed out by writers and critics alike. Thus Said notes in *Culture and Imperialism* that "the durability of empire was sustained on both sides, that of the rulers and that of the distant ruled, and in turn each had a set of interpretations of their common history with its own perspective, historical sense, emotions, and traditions" (11). The present study thus has aimed from the start at an elaboration and analysis of the colonial/post-colonial interpretations of this 'common history' from the viewpoint of the colonised in Naipaul and Ghosh on the ground of these two writers' being inheritors of a similar kind of legacy of humiliation and defeat of the colonial history.

However, quite expectedly, these interpretations of the colonial history and experience in these writers not only differ from the European accounts of the history of colonialism and imperialism, they, quite unexpectedly, at times also appear contrary to each other when put side by side. Thus, for example, while the traveling protagonists in Ghosh often excavate the histories and passions buried under the solidified substructure of European imperialism; in Naipaul the travels, migrations, and exiles often lead the characters to reinforce that very substructure. As for example, Salim in *Bend*, Willie in *Half and Magic*, and the narrator of *Enigma* not only find themselves to share a common objective of propagating the Western civilization with the imperial masters; but they also decline to accept any worthy alternative to the Western civilization in what they find to be chaotic, colonized societies even on the face of a growing demand for decolonization.

These characters, in fact, identify with and admire the imperial achievement and dominance over the supposedly primitive societies to such an extent that in these novels they often appear as the mouthpiece for Naipaul. Naipaul as a person has repeatedly expressed his admiration for a 'unitary notion of civilization' that he believes to have developed "from living in the bush. It came from a fear of being swallowed up by the bush, a fear of the people of the bush, and it's a fear I haven't altogether lost. They are the enemies of the civilization which I cherish" (qtd. in

Nixon 42). Thus Salim, a migrant businessman from an East African Muslim family, religiously plays squash wherever he is; avoids 'hubshi's wherever he is; and admits that the beautiful stamps produced by the British administration depicting familiar African scenes from a foreigner's viewpoint had taught him the European style of observation: "detaching myself from a familiar scene and trying to consider it as from a distance" (17). He also admits that he does not understand the Africans and their mind such as Zabeth's ignorance of banks, her undertaking perilous journeys for the sake of business, or the source of her putrid smell. Moreover, to Salim the African country seems menacing and incomprehensible: "The river and the forest were like presences, and much more powerful than you. You felt unprotected, an intruder" (9), while he joins the Europeans when describing his situation: "we all -- Asians, Greeks, and other Europeans -- remained prey [of Africans]. . ." (62).

It is the same with Willie in *Half and Magic* who grows embittered with the post-colonial societies in both India and Africa after spending a significant part of his life in these countries, but finds a model civilization only in the West, especially England. The narrator of *Enigma* too claims that only England could and has healed the wounds that his colonial-racial past in Trinidad had inflicted upon his psyche. All these characters, with their experiences and their convictions, thus are representatives of not the defeated/colonized people among whom they live for a time but of the West and its supposed grandness. The Africans and the Asians -- whether it is Metty, Ferdinand, Théotime, the Big Man, Marcus, Júlio the carpenter's daughter, the guerrillas, Shivdas, Joseph, Willie's parents etc -- are portrayed in Naipaul variously as ignorant, insignificant, primitive, un-enterprising, parasitic, corrupt, pathetic, self-delusive, inferior to and easily intimidated by the Europeans while vainly imitating them as their mimic men.

As it appears in Naipaul, these mimic men are self-destructive and menacing not only because defeated and cornered, but also because of an inherent savagery thus reflecting Naipaul's sentiments regarding the colonized: "My sympathy for the defeated, the futile, the abject, the idle and the parasitic gets less and less as I grow older" (qtd. in Mohan 149). Even the few Indian or African characters who are portrayed sympathetically like Indar, Sarojini, Mahesh, and Nazruddin, they are presented thus because of their sincere attempts at imbibing the Western world view while Naipaul shows how their colonial background almost always frustrates the possibility of their self-realization.

Contrariwise, the Europeans like Father Huismans, Raymond, Yvette, Roger, Perdita, the old landlord of the manor in *Enigma*, Jack, Pitton, Phillipps, Brenda and Les, Bray, Alan etc. are variously described as a person pure at heart and soul: a tragic hero sacrificed at the altar of primitive barbarousness; elegance and brilliance lost in a post-colonial chaos; people who are not only perfect as masters but can also be exemplary as servants; enterprising, creative, generous, cultured and refined, liberal, honest and so on. Even a final trip to the Sunday pub by an ailing Jack in *Enigma* meets with choking wonder and admiration by the narrator who finds the act heroic! Similarly, the ill-mannered and rowdy arrogance of the elder son of the dairyman in the novel is interpreted by the narrator as something he employed as "his only form of self-assertion" (36); though in *Bend*, Ferdinand's mildly provocative remarks are immediately met by Salim's uncontrollable desire "to put him in his place" (50).

Even those European characters that are not so sympathetically portrayed by Naipaul like Peter the banker, Roger's editor or the parents of Marcus's daughter-in-law, are presented so not because of their imperialist attitude and practice but precisely because they have forgotten their imperialistic past and have deviated from their expected role in safeguarding the imperial centre from the decay caused by its contact with the primitive societies. Thus a similar sentiment in or action by European and non-European characters encourages contradictory responses in Naipaul in each of these novels. Bray in *Enigma* for example, never turns out to be a mimic man in the eyes of the narrator in spite of his flaunting his ancestral connection with the grand manor while he also boasted of being a free man unlike his father who remained a servant in the manor till his death. But Júlio the carpenter's daughter, who attempts an intelligent conversation with Willie in *Half* when he first arrives in Portugal Africa, very soon turns out to be a thief and liar.

Likewise, while the atrocities of imperialism or the all-pervasive destruction caused by it in the colonized societies are rarely reviewed by Naipaul in the novels; the anarchy and widespread devastation caused by the decolonization that erase every trace of the civilizing presence and achievements of the West in the former colonies are vividly described in these novels to repeatedly state that colonialism was not only inevitable but the best thing to have happened to these countries as these were essentially inferior to the West. The identification with the imperialistic West by the

characters in Naipaul is thus represented by these words of Salim on a decolonized and therefore moribund Africa in *Bend*:

But the civilization wasn't dead. It was the civilization I existed in and in fact was still working towards. And that could make for an odd feeling: to be among the ruins was to have your time-sense unsettled. You felt like a ghost, not from the past, but from the future. You felt that your life and ambition had already been lived out for you and you were looking at the relics of that life.

You were in a place where the future had come and gone. (30)

Thus Naipaul's characters also reflect Albert Memmi's observation on the mind of the colonized that suffers from self-doubt when confronted with the declamations by his imperial master on his inferiority as

he admires and fears his powerful accuser. 'Is he not partially right?' he mutters. 'Are we not all a little guilty after all? Lazy, because we have so many idlers? Timid, because we let ourselves be oppressed.' Willfully created and spread by the colonizer, this mythical and degrading portrait ends up being accepted and lived with to a certain extent by the colonized. (153)

Anyway, in Ghosh the portrayal of the defeated, as the analysis in the previous chapters show, is entirely different from that of in Naipaul. While the response to the actions of the characters on the basis of their adherence to/belonging to the Western civilization is non-existent in Ghosh, the face of imperialism, on the other hand, is present in all his novels with its multifaceted complexity in such a way that defy any precise delineation.

Thus while the imperialistic practices are shown to ravage ancient lifestyles and trades in the colonies, destroying lives of kings and common people alike, plundering not only the natural resources of a country but also the cultural treasures by manipulating both the physical and intellectual space of the colonized, Ghosh also presents the humane face of the West in his novels. As for example, in *Palace* we have the character of the English governess who protests against the degradation the Burmese Royals were subjected to by the English; and also the character of Lieutenant-Colonel Buckland who unlike most other English officers like Captain Pearson sincerely though mistakenly believes in the civilizing missions of the West and in the equality between the Indian officers and the English ones, and is respected by everyone, even the rebel soldiers, till the end.

Likewise, Ghosh also declines to present the colonized only in terms of their defeat and degradation just as he, unlike Naipaul, does not blame the defeated for their history of defeat. At the same time, he does not glorify either the defeated by portraying them as tragic heroes—the Burmese Royals, the old Malik, Jeevanbhai, Jabir, and Kusum are neither presented as heroically tragic in their defeat, nor are their defeat presented as the culmination of their history. Rather, the novels present them, their protests, and their eventual defeat as the expressions of a multilateral human history that defies uniform explanations of events. Thus the Indian Ocean traders being vanquished by the Portuguese in *Antique* does not necessarily mean that the conquered were essentially inferior, but that the traders adhered to a unique culture of non-violence that the West could never conceptualize.

Like Naipaul Ghosh too is concerned with the history and humiliation of defeat: “this has really been our history for a long, long time: the absolute fact of defeat and the absolute fact of trying to articulate defeat to yourself and trying to build a culture around the centrality of defeat” (qtd. in Mondal 38). But unlike Naipaul he refuses to view the defeated as responsible for their defeat and thus never tries to justify their subjugation by a superior, civilizing force. Also, the antipathy in Naipaul towards the defeated almost never allows him to pay any tribute to the vanquished, as the history he follows is undoubtedly the history the conquerors wrote. Yeats appears to explain this situation for us: “Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (qtd. in Said *Culture* 286).

Ghosh however has a different approach to the history of the colonized, as he carefully points out how the brutal and deliberate actions of imperialism not only imposed a history of their liking on the colonized but also gradually erased the native history. Thus the history that is lost irretrievably in Ghosh include the brutality of the imperialistic British army during its invasions and crushing of the mutinies; the wealth and civilization of the pre-colonial Burma; the rich cultural bond among the countries like China, Egypt and India; the history of cotton in the ancient world and so on.

But in Naipaul ‘the oldest Africa’ is a time of chaos, savagery and corruption—rampant with slave trades, ivory smuggling and lootings, while the colonial rule is a period of fair trade and prosperity. Decolonization in Naipaul, on the other hand—is a

retrograde step taking Africa back to primitivism, thus putting an end to all trades and cultural exchange—as in the cases of Salim, Nazruddin, Father Huismans or the second-rank estate owners like the Correias in Portuguese Africa. But quite interestingly, in Ghosh just the opposite is shown to be the fact whether it is the violent disruption of a culturally rich and commercially successful connection between Egypt and India, or the destruction of the medieval trade route in Indian Ocean by the West's greed and military attack, or the plunder of the pre-colonial Burma by Western imperialism.

The erasure/distortion of the history of the colonized also leads to other interesting differences between these two novelists, as for example in the concept of slave and the relationship between master and slave. The concept of slave in pre-colonial Asia or Africa would refer to anything from an apprentice to disciple or a spiritual subordination to God; although according to Ghosh in *Antique*, this concept was distorted by Europe in the colonial period. Ghosh also notes how the “fictive ties of kinship” created between the slave and the master in earlier times were commonly found among the merchants in medieval Cairo or with many tribes in Africa where “slaves were sometimes gradually incorporated into their masters’ households and came to be counted as members of their families” (*Antique* 260).

This historical note by Ghosh on the other hand, comes strikingly close to the concept of slavery in Naipaul's *Bend*. Here Salim—who anyway claims at the beginning of the novel that whatever history he has received is from the Europeans and not from his family or ancestral land—hates it when Metty and other slaves in his coastal home behave like family members and stubbornly refuse to leave their “masters’ alone.” “The last thing they wanted to hear was that they had to go. . . . It wasn't that they were proud of slavery as a condition; what they were fierce about was their special connection with a family of repute” (*Bend* 14-15).

And thus while Ghosh painstakingly tries to retrace Bomma—a mere slave from the European viewpoint—Salim in Naipaul tries hard to get rid of him and is eventually successful in leaving him behind. Likewise, in *Bend* when Nazruddin points out to Salim how the Arabs are “pumping the oil in and sucking the money out” (274); we are offered a different history by Ghosh in *Reason* as he shows how the British had forced the fiercely independent Malik during the imperial period to sign the treaty that would allow England to plunder its treasure of oil. However, even though Ghosh notes with sadness the way European imperialism disfigures a whole

nation— it is not the less significant that Jeevanbhai, whom colonialism turns into a deformed spy, thrived as a cross-country matchmaker in the pre-colonial al-Ghazira; he never does try to retreat into a pre-colonial past to undo the humiliation of defeat. Thus, as Mondal too finds regarding Ghosh: “This sense of defeat is registered in the elegiac tone of much of his writing; it perhaps lurks behind his ubiquitous sense of irony, an irony he shares with many postmodern writers who similarly envisage a world ‘beyond repair’” (38).

Nevertheless, although this sense of a “world beyond repair” is common in both Naipaul and Ghosh, the responses to this sense of loss and defeat are markedly different in these writers. The characters in Naipaul, for example, desperately cling to the world that they are compensated with for the loss of a world that they find to be of little value. But the characters in Ghosh probe deeper and try to retrieve the lost world to examine its worth and value along with the forces responsible for the loss, while the outcome of this examination often makes them mourn for the loss of such a colossal magnitude.

Thus in *Antique*, as if to echo Said’s words on the cultural subversion at imperial contact “when the cultural riches of India, China, Japan, Persia, and Islam were firmly deposited at the heart of European culture” (*Culture* 234), Ghosh shows us how the Geniza in the Synagogue in Egypt was plundered by the Western scholars in the name of Oriental Studies. While Ghosh negates the view that the ignorance of the value of the Geniza documents led these to be plundered by the West; he points out that it was the elite members of society who had allowed this plunder in order to maintain a cordial relationship with the imperial masters. Naipaul too has one such incident in *Bend*, where Father Huismans’s collection of African masks and local artifacts are stolen by an American visitor to find their way to some American museum. Salim, anyway, attributes this theft to the ignorance of the local Africans as they neither have the knowledge nor the disposition to inherit the impressive collection of Father Huismans. This episode also serves to prove Salim’s observation that while only the West can translate the primitiveness into something estimable—that had led them to colonize these otherwise savage and horrible places in the first place—then it is only with the West that these estimable aspects will be kept safe.

However, the concern that Ghosh shows in the plunder of the non-Western cultural riches by the colonizing West is not totally absent in Naipaul, though it is only reserved for the reverse situations as like when the narrator of *Enigma* notes with

concern and sadness how the German brothers are pilfering various things from the manor ground after Mr Phillips's death; or when Salim notes with bitterness and frustration how in the decolonized Africa the local people are fighting among themselves like mad dogs to have a chance to plunder the shops and business concerns of the foreigners.

But, it is in the context of colonial education and its effect on the colonized that these two novelists agree and disagree most. While the characters in Naipaul admit at times that the colonial education they had received remained essentially abstract – as the narrator of *Enigma* recounts how he had memorized the wonders of the West in his school days in Trinidad as if learning a city's map even before visiting it in person – they nevertheless also try their best to absorb their colonial education. And even when they suffer temporary setbacks in realizing their education in real life, for them the reason for this lies not in some inherent deficiency in the education but with their colonial past that never ceases to pull them backwards. Thus the narrator of *Enigma* symbolically presents this betrayal of his past that follows him even to England with its colonial shame through the Mediterranean story based on the Chirico painting, and Indar's failure and sufferings are related by Salim to his inability to "trample on the past" and to leave behind his colonial background. Likewise, Willie fails because he too remains trapped in his shameful past and uses his colonial education just as a means to fabricate a new identity for himself; while Sarojini, though she learns to question the validity of her colonial history, remains till the end an intellectual slave of her German husband.

But apart from these central characters who receive a sympathetic portrayal from Naipaul, the majority of the characters in his novels are presented as complete failures in this aspect – though it is not their colonial education that fails them; it is rather they who fail their grand colonial education because of their inferior intellectual capacity and thus turn out to be unworthy inheritors of this education. For example, Ferdinand and all the other African boys in the lycée or in the Domain remain to Salim irredeemably primitive and thus undeserving of Western education. Likewise, Willie's parents, the educated guerrillas, or even Joseph, a college teacher, also appear unable to grasp the true worth and significance of the Western education that they are rather prone to misinterpret.

In a way, thus, Naipaul reflects what Said had pointed out about the nature and function of colonial education in India – "In the system of education designed for

India, students were taught not only English literature but also the inherent superiority of the English race" (*Culture* 121). But what is significant, is that although a brilliantly perceptive Naipaul does not fail to note the dissatisfaction with the colonial education in every single character in his novels, he never allows them to seriously challenge the worth of this education—the 'superior value' of which remains beyond any doubt, while the characters blame their inferior mental ancestry that does not allow them a successful absorption of this flawless education.

In Ghosh, on the other hand, the colonial education never achieves such an unassailable status as the novelist not only shows the dubious nature and function of the colonial education in the life and psyche of the characters like Balaram and Beni, he also indicates the way these characters subvert the very tenets of this system of education while trying to apply these into their life following their blind belief in these tenets. Thus the Rationalists' unsuccessful and absurd attempts in *Reason* to combine the traditional Hindu customs and beliefs with the 'universal' knowledge system of the West eventually indicate the not so universal nature of the knowledge system they worship. We cannot but also note how Balaram, with his blind belief in phrenology — an imperialistic pseudo-science introduced to prove the inferiority of the non-white races by a mere examination of their skulls that were supposedly different from the Europeans — actually exposes the fissures in the Western knowledge system. Thus, Mondal too describes Balaram as "an archetypal figure of the colonial subject as envisaged by colonial ideologues, a mimic man schooled in the historic achievements of Western knowledge" (46).

Although Toru-debi, having suffered enough because of her husband's preoccupation with the hypocritical and deceptive world of Western knowledge, burns down Balaram's library — though not in the comic way Willie's father attempts to burn his books in the university campus in *Half*—Alu manages to salvage a vital book in the library, *The Life of Pasteur*. This particular book symbolizes in the novel the deceptive aura of universality and humanitarianism of the Western science and knowledge that leads both Balaram and Alu to a path of self-destruction; although in the end of the novel Alu realizes the true nature of this colonial education and disentangles himself from it by putting the book into the funeral pyre of Kullī.

Palace too displays in Beni the far-reaching implications of an education system that aims at manufacturing the model colonial subject and that Uma foresees as a system capable of shaping a whole nation. As Uma finds that even a good and

intelligent person like Beni cannot free himself from the anxiety of living up to his colonial education and training: she is further disheartened by the thought whether a time will come when the whole India will be full of such mimic men who will want to follow the footsteps of these supposedly 'modern' Indians like Beni. Anyway, Beni, whom Queen Supayalat calls a self-delusional servant to his British masters, too is shown to subvert this very notion of a superior race of masters in the British in his manners such as by his occasional referring to his British colleagues as '*amader gurujon*' ('our teachers') (136), or by his actions with symbolic undertones such as when he, confident of his skill as a rower he had acquired in England, takes out the boat of the legendary rower, Mr Gibb, in a moment of crisis and drowns with it.

Nevertheless, like Naipaul, Ghosh too offers a number of characters who appear to be unable to assimilate into the Western knowledge system although here too Ghosh's treatment is different. Hem Narain Mathur, known among his friends as Dantu, and his daughter Dr Mrs Uma Verma in *Reason* for example are presented by Ghosh as the characters who do not follow the conventional norms prescribed by a colonial education system. Thus while Dantu spends his life among the poor villagers with his ideas and practices of socialism, Uma not only attempts a dance drama presentation of Tagore's *Chitrangada* in front of an Algerian audience to celebrate the third anniversary of the team of the Indian doctors' arrival in the town of El Oued, but also manages a cross-cultural funeral for Kullî.

But it is in the case of Uma in *Palace* that the resistance to the spiritual and intellectual enslavement by an order of colonial education appears most remarkable. While Beni tries from the very first night of his marriage with Uma to take her into the ambit of Western thought and culture, Uma recognizes the degradation and humiliation involved in the submission of her soul and mind to such an education and desperately resists it. It is as if Uma in Ghosh could finally resist what Sarojini in Naipaul was helplessly transformed into—an intellectual slave of her husband whose thoughts and convictions she loyally follows at the cost of her intellectual and spiritual liberty. The enslavement reaches such an extent in Sarojini that she finds herself an alien in her own country, while her occasional attempts at breaking free of this slavery reinforce her realization that her transformation is irreversible.

But, in Ghosh a character's realization of being a spiritual and intellectual slave of the West to this magnitude is responded to in a much graver scale, as in the case of Arjun in *Palace*. Arjun breaks down in shock and horror once he realizes that though

his education and military training led him to look at himself as a modern Indian who is at par with the Europeans; he basically was a colonial construct who was no more respectable to an Englishman as his batman Kishan Singh was to him. Once this realization dawns on him he too reacts in a similarly self-destructive way as by Beni; as once these men perceive the extent of damage done to them by a colonial training, they in a futile attempt to undo the damage and retrieve their soul and mind destroy their very entity. In Naipaul, however, although the characters like Indar, Sarojini or the narrator of *Enigma* too realize the impossibility of undoing the disfigurement like Beni or Arjun in Ghosh; unlike them they are unwilling to face that dreaded and despairing moment of self-awareness. They thus refuse to see themselves as colonial constructs to remain forever trapped into the no-man's-land between their colonial reality and the elusive future manufactured by the West.

Nevertheless, it is not always that the resistance to a colonial constitution of identity meets with such a destructive and futile outcome in Ghosh. Uma in *Palace* for example, offers a different response to the realization of her 'disfigurement' caused by the agents of colonialism: "some part of her was irretrievably the Collector's creation, and if nothing was to be served by mourning this disfigurement, then it was her duty to turn her abilities to the task of seeking a remedy" (187). The remedial steps adopted by her in a way also register her protest against the insidious operations of the empire because now she uses those very tools that were used to 'disfigure' her for a different purpose—she spends her husband's pension on her travels in Europe that enlighten her about the monstrosity of imperialism and eventually help her to join the anti-imperialistic groups in Europe. When in this context—that reminds us of what Pratt termed as 'transculturation'—Dinu, à la Naipaul, points out the inconsistency in her using the language of the very people she is fighting, Uma points it out to him that using a foreign language does not necessarily mean an adoption of the foreigner's world view: "Many great Jewish writers write in German. Do you think that prevents them from recognizing the truth?" (295).

In Ghosh, the transculturation that Pratt speaks of is extended beyond its known limits in a way that is both interesting and significant as can be seen in the macabre story told by Saya John to Rajkumar in *Palace*. In the story an English Assistant in one of the forest camps in Burma flouts a rule among the local handlers of elephants, that required the Englishman to sign a release form before burying a dead employee. The Englishman had to pay for this with his brutal death that was rumoured to be

caused by the dead handler's ghost and his faithful elephant. What strange ways the invader had to pay in for entering another's world with disrespect!

Such mingling of fact and fiction can also be seen in *Antique* where as if to commemorate the traditional ties between India and Egypt that was destroyed by the West, both these countries share a similar story of how a holy place—the tomb of Sidi Abu-Kanaka in Egypt and a Bhuta-shrine in India— would resist a possible desecration by the mighty governments. While in both these stories the authorities would try to build a road or a canal through the holy place, the earth would however turn unyielding that eventually made the government surrender. These episodes might remind one of a different world in Naipaul's *Africa* where everything—the weather, the earth, nature—tries to revert back to its primitive state, as if in a conscious way: though in the England of *Enigma* the narrator is delighted to find, after he mows the lawn after a long break, the place to revert back to civilization as if that was its natural state.

Anyway, another issue that appears relevant in this context is the matter of ecocide that the post-colonial societies are often accused of although it remains nothing but an imperial legacy. As the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* point out that the destruction of environment began with the expansion of colonies of the West and its industrialization process: Ghosh also notes the way the West plundered the natural resources of a Burma or an al-Ghazira, or the way a Sir Daniel experimented with setting human habitation in a seemingly uninhabitable place like the country of the tides.

Furthermore, as *The Empire Writes Back* observes: the "Post-colonial societies have taken up the 'civilizing' benefits of modernity, only to find themselves the 'barbaric' instigators of environmental damage. In such ways the dynamic of imperial moral power is maintained globally" (213). Ghosh echoes the same sentiment as he shows how the settlers in Marichjhāpi are brutally uprooted in the name of environment-preservation though the settlers were only following the footsteps of Sir Daniel whose vision of taming the tide country had never lacked admirers even in a post-colonial India. But quite ironically, the same state authority that crushes the hopes and lives of the settlers to supposedly preserve the natural habitat of wild animals in the islands is oblivious to the rare Irrawaddy dolphins being killed under the propellers of the forest guards' motorboats. Moreover, Naipaul, unlike Ghosh, appears to be inconsistent in his attitude towards environment as although he is

unhappy to find the rural face of England being modernized in *Enigma*, he is disappointed to find the rural face of Africa resisting modernization in *Bend*.

Besides, unlike Naipaul, Ghosh refuses to admire the technological progress in the West as the unmixed blessing that the rest of the world receives like a god's gift. Thus Ghosh attempts a seemingly impossible task of bringing together an Indian born American cetologist and an illiterate fisherman in the Sundarbans in *Tide* without any hierarchical relationship on a venture that allows both Fokir's role as a fisherman and Piya's role as a cetologist weave seamlessly: "But that it had proved possible for two such different people to pursue their own ends simultaneously – people who could not exchange a word with each other and had no idea of what was going on in one another's heads – was far more than surprising; it seemed almost miraculous" (141).

Although Ghosh thus presents a narrative that denies any essential conflict between traditional and modern approaches to life and environment; in Naipaul we repeatedly have the impression that the soil and environment, along with the 'primitive' people in Africa, are at a constant war against civilization and modernity. The latter is symbolized in Naipaul exclusively by the presence and actions of the Europeans, although it is 'the bush' that eventually takes over the monuments of civilization in his novels. The resistance to imperialism in Naipaul thus is always transformed into a resistance against modernity and civilization, while the anger and hatred against the colonizer is interpreted as the urge of the 'primitive and savage' people to revert back to their barbarous state from the folds of culture and civilization that they cannot understand or appreciate.

Thus naturally, what emerges as the aftermath of such a resistance against European presence in the colonized land is a breakdown of the civil society, social and cultural norms; sprouting of evil and despotic tyrants to fill the vacuum left by the colonizers; and an overall degradation of the nature of the colonized as decolonization works against his servile and dependent nature. Metty, for example, although relishes his new-found freedom and a different identity initially, very soon becomes embittered by the responsibilities towards self and family that follow the emancipation. He eventually surrenders to his servile self when he pathetically requests Salim to save him from other menacing Africans like Théotime. But when Metty finally realizes that a national decolonization has irreversibly robbed him of the luxury of being a slave, he disintegrates, becomes a traitor and fatally betrays his master-cum-friend in a moment of rage.

As in the context of imperialism, in the issue of decolonization too Naipaul's characters seem to adopt a Western viewpoint beginning from those very first moments of discontent and protest. As for example while Ghosh shows that the humiliating realization of being victims of racial segregation enrages the Indian soldiers in the British Indian Army in *Palace*; in Naipaul we find that the central characters like Willie or Salim feels comfortable with the same colonial system that infuriated the Indian soldiers. Thus Salim in *Bend*, who is disgusted by the decolonized Africans showing off their gold at every chance in public places, feels comfortable at the Tivoli: "Tivoli was meant for our Europeans. It was a family restaurant. . . . The atmosphere was European. Africans kept away. There were no officials with gold watches and gold pen and pencil sets, as at Mahesh's. While you were at the Tivoli you could live without that tension" (195).

Thus it is not strange that the process of decolonization would be viewed in Naipaul from a different perspective than in Ghosh; and also that Naipaul will uphold the European claim that decolonization took place because the imperial masters were graceful enough to grant the colonized his freedom when he asked for it. Moreover, in Naipaul we also come across a view that because imperialism was basically a civilizing mission by the West, the imperial masters were reluctant to leave the colonized people in the mess where they found them at the moment of contact. However, although this view robs the colonized of even the agency and power to decide and act for themselves, Naipaul's practice of contradicting himself is apparent in this issue too. Thus when in *Half Graça* makes it known that she earnestly wants to share her house and property with the rebellious Africans, Ana thinks otherwise: "She is not giving them anything. Even in her grief she is fooling herself. They are taking it from her" (226).

Likewise, Said too claims that "the empire never gives anything out of goodwill" in the context of decolonization (in India); and goes on to add, "It cannot *give* Indians their freedom, but must be forced to yield it as the result of a protracted political, cultural, and sometimes military struggle that becomes more, not less adversarial as time goes on" (*Culture* 249). This is exactly what happens in *Palace* in spite of Lieutenant-Colonel Buckland's claim that the English rulers were delaying to grant freedom to the Indians because of a sense of responsibility towards them (though it is negated by the very Europeans who mercilessly bar Asians to board the relief train to flee from a war torn Burma). Thus gradually it becomes clear to everyone in the novel

that the mass-mutiny of the Indian soldiers aided by nationalist movements in India and abroad has made the continuation of the empire in India quite impossible.

Anyway, like Naipaul, Ghosh too does not fail to note the colossal loss of human lives and massive destruction that is caused by a violent process of decolonization. Nevertheless, Ghosh also seems to keep in mind Said's view that while violence is inseparable from decolonization, it is only the logical culmination of the atrocities and violations that have been going on since the very beginning of colonization (*Culture* 283). *Palace* or *Antique* thus offers a glimpse at the violence and destruction caused by the invading West into the Asian or African lands/oceans and follows it with a similarly violent decolonization in these countries. Uma in *Palace* however represents a different kind of fight for freedom in her following Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence as she too realizes that an armed resistance to the colossal military power of the British would only result into a massive bloodbath for the Indians.

But in Naipaul, we only come to witness the violence at the departure of the colonizers while that of the time of arrival is conveniently pushed aside. However, like Naipaul, Ghosh too appears quite cynical about the possibility of a successful decolonization in a country colonized for long—be it India, Egypt or Burma—though here too the reason for his cynicism is completely different from that in Naipaul. While Naipaul finds the inherent primitiveness of the colonized responsible for the failure of the process of decolonization, Ghosh observes that a decolonization guided by the hatred for the colonizer yet trying to build a future nation around the Western world view is bound to fail because of the self-destructive paradox in its frame.

Furthermore, what Ghosh suggests in *Palace* is that unless a country strives simultaneously for the ouster of the colonizers while strengthening its national, social and economic identity by eradicating its social evils – some of these traditional, some planted by the colonizer, the decolonization would only pave the way for further invasions by neo-colonial powers. As for instances of this kind of imperialism in new guises, Ghosh presents the oppressive post-colonial Burma ruled by a despotic military power in *Palace*; the barbaric state machinery in India in *Tide*; and the reign of global capitalism in *Reason* and in *Antique*.

Although Ghosh appears perceptive enough to realize the limitations and perils involved in the process of decolonization, he does not ever dismiss the whole process as futile and ruinous. What the novelist rather believes is that it is a process to cover generations, as Arjun in *Palace* perceives that a real decolonization of a country like

India, so gravely disfigured by colonialism, “was the work of centuries” (441). But where Ghosh differs most from Naipaul in this context are on the issues of a comparative view of the imperialistic nations to identify the best among these, and the denunciation of a turbulent decolonization with the desire to revert to the stability of the colonial society that might appear more liberating. Thus when Dinu points it out to Uma in *Palace* that the Nazis or the Fascists would make worse imperial masters than the British who had helped to eradicate so many social evils in India and had also led it to the path of modernity; Uma argues that when “caught between two scourges: two sources of absolute evil”, instead of choosing one of these we should reject both. Besides, as Uma rightly points out, the British “Empire has become the ideal of national success – a model for all nations to aspire to”, and thus can be considered as the archetype of all future Empires (293-4). And as for the Empire being liberating and progressive, Uma argues that Dinu is believing what the Empire wants him to believe – that it is a civilizing mission; while she points out that there are other nations and countries like Burma whose rich culture and civilization have been ruthlessly destroyed by the European invasion.

As regards a disappointing decolonization, that might find one to mourn the death of empire, Ghosh again thinks different. Thus when an embittered Dinu tells his wife how he finds the despotic neo-colonial rulers in Burma— who justify their tyranny as a way to keep the country free from imperialist Europe—worse than the former colonizers; his wife disagrees: “To use the past to justify the present is bad enough but it’s just as bad to use the present to justify the past” (537). Thus while Ghosh acknowledges the failure of decolonization in most of the former colonies, like Naipaul he does not choose the apparent accomplishment of the imperial masters from the futile desire for freedom in the colonized. Furthermore, Ghosh also presents before us the counter-narratives and suppressed histories to invalidate the idea of the Empire’s being progressive, liberating, and civilizing—an idea that had led Naipaul to argue that decolonization meant nothing but a retreat for the colonized into the darkness of barbarism and primitiveness. Thus it is the imperialistic Europe that Ghosh finds to be essentially barbaric, as in *Palace* Uma is disheartened to perceive the all-pervading effects of the savagery of colonialism. She believes these effects to be irremediable even by an act of decolonization while the price of colonialism has to be paid generation after generation in India who “would enter the new epoch as cripples, lacking the most fundamental means of survival: that they would truly

become in the future what they had never been in the past, a burden upon the world” (222).

And quite ironically, as if to prove Uma true both in the literal and metaphorical senses, Naipaul introduces the ‘cripple’ in *Magic* in the form of Joseph, whom Willie sees as the product of a failed decolonization like the guerrillas in India, and not as the one paying the price of Empire as Uma would like to see. Like the self-delusional guerrillas—who remain ignorant of the value of their colonial past despite their college and university degrees—Joseph too loves to think himself as an intellectual leader of the common people. Like the guerrillas, Joseph too believes that the vacuous common people in India have to be coerced into a revolutionary social movement, while the blood and massive destruction of the movement excites him, like a child out for mischief, beyond limit. It is as if Joseph is out to avenge his pathetic physical disability on the rest of the world through a movement that would give him his self-worth back, because he never displays any compassion and empathy for the poor people whom he claims to decolonize from the clutches of an unseen class enemy.

In fact Naipaul, in every instance of an event of decolonization in his novels, observes that the spontaneous uprising of the mass against an imperialistic power is only a myth, and that these uprisings are always manipulated by, led by, and numbered by the people who use the liberation movement not for any greater social-political justice but for their personal causes. These causes may include the desire to avenge humiliation as in the cases of the Liberation army in *Bend*, the guerrillas in *Magic*, and Gandhi in *Half*; or simply the desire to acquire more power and money like Shivdas or the guerrilla leaders of the highest rank in *Magic*. And thus while in Ghosh it is the representatives of imperialism who are robbed off any individuality like ‘the Goat’s Arse’ or ‘the Thin Lips’ in *Reason*; in Naipaul it is the rebel who remains nameless like Júlio the carpenter’s daughter in *Half* or most of the guerrillas—called variously as ‘the leader’, ‘the man of the council’ or ‘the stranger’ in *Magic*.

Moreover, Naipaul also shows in *Magic* how the villagers seem to feel relieved at the occasional deaths of the guerrillas in police ambush as if that was the real moment of decolonization for them, while they still appear to revere the remnants of the imperial governance around them and resent their erasure by the guerrillas. Naipaul, in his brilliantly sarcastic way, further shows how even the guerrillas, who are nothing but tyrants and despots to the villagers, are benefitted by the old colonial system in the

jails. While the British used to treat the political prisoners like Gandhi or Nehru with respect and keep them in special cells, these are now enjoyed by the guerrillas in the post-colonial India. Naipaul here seems to suggest that the national leaders of India, worshipped as heroes who have successfully ousted the British, owe their greatness to nothing but the civilizing presence of the British in India: while a decolonized India can produce nothing better than these grotesque and perverse national heroes in the figures of Kandapalli or the guerillas.

Thus, as it appears, not only Naipaul refuses to admit the savagery of the imperial masters and the need/possibility of a successful decolonization; but he also reverses the concept of neo-colonialism as to be a native phenomenon that not only enslaves the so-called decolonized people, but also thwarts the intervention of a civilizing Europe that tries to help the hapless decolonized country out of compassion. Timothy Weiss, however, echoes Uma's words on the far-reaching consequences of the savage rule of European imperialism in the former colonies when he examines the troubled post-colonial Africa: "Sub-Saharan Africa is not innately flawed, but it is still recouping from centuries of colonialism, which left it with a scarcity of doctors, teachers, administrators, scientists, and technicians" (191).

Thus the colonial education that appears flawless to the characters in Naipaul, but had shocked Uma in *Palace* by its inadequacy in the colonies as compared to in other European nations, is observed by Weiss to have left the colonies with a minimum number of educated and skilled people at the time of decolonization. As for example, Weiss shows how at the time of independence while there were 16 university graduates in Congo, there was not even a single Congolese doctor, secondary school teacher or army officer in there, and goes on to remark: "We need to separate the myth from the reality: historically, the plight of Africa originates not in a debilitating Africanness, but in colonialism; today that plight has worsened because of a postcolonial, economic order that virtually assures that the continent will remain indebted and underdeveloped" (191).

Naipaul, anyway, refuses to look at the post-colonial world from such a perspective as the disorder and the emergence of the native despots in a colony after decolonization are interpreted by Salim in *Bend* as the expression of a self-destructive decolonization. Likewise, the Domain remains to him as a symbol of another civilizing attempt by the West that is doomed to fail because of the primitiveness of the Africans.

Naipaul, nevertheless, also appears to subvert these eurocentric views in spite of himself on these issues. As for example, Raymond, as a guide to the indecisive future President, quite predictably advises him to enlist for the army instead of joining “Those clubs and associations . . . talking shops, debating societies, where Africans posture for Europeans and hope to pass as evolved” (153). Thus Raymond, quite ironically, betrays the imperialistic sentiment that discourages the colonized from participating in intellectual discussions and debates and rather encourages him to become an unthinking, obedient soldier who will remain unqualified for ever to govern his own country and thus might usher in a troubled decolonization that Naipaul accuses the colonized for. That this imperialistic tendency to exclude the colonized from a socio-political consciousness is still practiced, even in decolonization, is evident from the operational activities in the Domain.

However, in Naipaul the foundation of an institution like the Domain is laid long before it comes into operation. As Indar explains to Salim how the Europe had been planning to prepare the African refugees for a better revolution in this former colony: “If Africa had a future, it lay with those refugees. My idea was to remove them from the countries where they couldn’t operate and send them . . . to those parts of the continent where they could. A continental interchange . . . to give Africa the better news about itself and to make a start on the true African revolution” (178). Though Indar, acting on behalf of his imperialistic masters, makes the proposition sound so noble and altruistic; we cannot but notice the unswerving dominion of the West over the former colonies. The former master now tries newer ways to reach the post-colonial mind and shape it for further subjugation and also to control these societies including their revolutions. Likewise, the Domain too unabashedly serves as a mode of neo-colonialism upon the young and impressionable Africans who are lured into it, to borrow Arjun’s words in *Palace*, to be “touched by the unseen potter” (430).

In this issue too Naipaul and Ghosh seem to complement each other’s views when Ghosh’s observation regarding the way Western academy changes the history, customs and culture of the colonized in *Antique* is reflected in *Bend* too. Thus in one of the seminars, organized as part of the ‘continental interchange’ of ideas in the Domain, Ferdinand asks Indar on the justification of introducing a foreign religion like Christianity to the Africans, and Indar answers: “‘You are men of modern world. Do you need African religion? Or are you being sentimental about it? Are you nervous of losing it? Or do you feel you have to hold on to it just because it’s yours?’”

(141). These words of Indar, quite ironically, remind one of the confrontation Ghosh in *Antique* had with the modern Egyptian interrogator whose Western outlook on the difference between religion and superstition had dismayed Ghosh only to be led to another disheartening discovery of the success with which the non-Western views and beliefs were changed "to suit the patterns of the Western academy" (342). Thus, in spite of himself, Indar too eventually reveals the neo-imperial nature of the Domain in the novel: "'You see why my outfit is needed. Unless we can get them thinking, and give them real ideas instead of just politics and principles, these young men will keep our world in turmoil for the next half century'" (142).

But in an ironic twist, when Hajj Fahmy in *Reason* tells his audience that a structure that nobody wants cannot stand for long regarding the collapse of the Star, his words prove true even in the context of the Domain, though Naipaul would want us to believe that the Domain failed because "the bush" can never be civilized. In fact the concept of a neo-colonial West is so very implausible to Naipaul that he often satirizes such an idea in his novels. As for example in *Magic* the village thug accuses the guerrilla team of being CIA, and Willie compares the senior guerrilla leaders ordering the murder of as many rich villagers as possible (as a show of their strength) with a retail chain ordering its managers to improve sales, thereby suggesting that no such Western policy of neo-colonialism exists although an incompetent post-colonial nation fabricates these ideas to hide its failures behind these lies. Thus in his analysis of the colonial and post-colonial situations in a country, Naipaul seems to suggest that just as the colonial past of shame and defeat is unchangeable, the past (and present) achievement and greatness of the imperial Europe in comparison is also unassailable. And as the former colonies do not want to acknowledge these facts, their attempts at decolonization are doomed to failure.

The adoption of this eurocentric world view by Naipaul is again noticeable in his characters' disapproval of the racial intermingling that they think is the reason of the decay of the race of the masters. Salim in *Bend* for example notes that the racial intermingling between the Africans and the Arabs had led to the latter's loss of glory and authority in a place that they had once colonized: "The slaves had swamped the masters; the Arabian race of the master had virtually disappeared" (16). Salim fears the same fate for the Europeans too, as does Willie for the Portuguese in *Half* and for the English in *Magic*. In *Half* Willie finds the decay of the Portuguese inevitable as the former masters are now turned into second-rank Portuguese through a racial

degeneration caused by inter-racial marriages that finds its most potent symbolic representation in the marriage—of convenience, as rumoured—between a pure Portuguese architect Gouveia and a plain African village woman and in her pregnancy.

In *Magic* this representative child—symbolizing a grotesque mingling of unequal races—is finally born to lead the decay of the master's race to its nadir as presented by Naipaul in the episode of the marriage between Marcus's son and an English woman of a decaying aristocratic family. But, Naipaul, while presenting the way a mimic man like Marcus diminishes the grandeur of an imperial centre by his attempts at being granted admittance into it, also proves, in spite of himself, that the imperial centre appears all so wonderful to the colonized soul because he is kept outside of it. But once this mimic man approaches the centre it is revealed to him as to be nothing but a mirage while Naipaul misconceives this discovery as the sign of decay.

In this marriage episode Naipaul has another symbolic representation of the imperial decay in the portrayal of the 'startling' black and white couple at the wedding. Thus everyone notices how the white girl clings to the waist of the suave African man: "He outshone everyone, but he himself was lost behind his tinted glasses, concentrating on his burden. With the girl clinging on he appeared to be walking sideways and sometimes backwards because of her weight" (290). Here Naipaul seems to present a sarcastic reversal of the image of 'the white man's burden' (even as the African seems unable to carry his 'burden') as an indication of the decay that remains disintegrating and disgraceful for both the former master and the former slave. Even in *Bend*, where Raymond is shown to be appreciative of the Big Man as a leader while working as his intellectual guide; Salim soon discovers that in public imagination Raymond has been turned into 'the President's white man'—someone who goes before the President to divert the curse and ill will directed to the leader to himself.

All these episodes and observations lead to a number of unambiguous views in Naipaul regarding the decay of the imperial civilization. Thus Naipaul claims that the grand, civilizing mission of the West, as displayed in the gullible generosity of Jack in *Enigma* who wants to share the wealth of his achievement with the rest of the world, is vulnerable to and runs the risk of being infected with the ills of the primitive societies when they come into contact. Europe, therefore, should stay away from the non-Western societies if it wants to stay healthy as the colonized—poisonous

parasites—are the real source of almost every kind of decay and deformation to be found in the post-colonial Europe.

Although Naipaul is saddened by the decay in the imperial Europe and finds the colonial contact and intermingling between the races of slaves and masters as the source of the decay; Ghosh offers us just the opposite view. In his novels Ghosh suggests that not only European imperialism destroyed a rich history of continental intermingling between races, cultures and classes; it had replaced that native history with another one that disapproved of inter-racial, inter-religious, and inter-class mingling in its colonies. As for example, Jeevanbhai's thriving business of match-making across continents in *Reason* is destroyed by the intervention of the British in al-Ghazira, as is the intercontinental trade and cultural exchange among traders of different countries in *Antique* by the Portuguese. In *Tide* too we find a Westernized Kanai to be perplexed to find that Piya could develop such a comfortable relationship with an illiterate fisherman like Fokir.

But it is in *Palace* that the colonizers' attempt at keeping the races, religions and classes different is revealed straightforwardly by the novelist. Whether it is the imperial master's ire at the marriage between the Burmese Princess and an Indian commoner; or the segregation between master and slaves in the army as Arjun finds, "the British Indian army has always functioned on the understanding that there was to be a separation between Indians and Britishers" (283), the situation and the sentiments are different in Ghosh. The world of the imperial master in Ghosh is just not as progressive and altruistic as in Naipaul, and even when such illusions are nurtured these are eventually shattered real hard.

Ghosh thereby in *Place* claims that the British Indian army had always kept their Indian soldiers "drawn from different castes and religions" to prevent any united resistance against the colonizer by the colonized who could bond on the ground of religion or caste. In spite of this, when such events occur, this kind of united resistance to the British masters take the colonizers by surprise: "That Hindu and Muslim troops could act together to support an Indian officer came as a shock to the High Command" (319). The same shock is however also reserved for the Indian soldiers in the novel, who like a Salim, Willie or Indar would nurture an illusion of equality with the British and "really believe that the British stand for freedom and equality". But as Arjun finds later, the disillusionment is shattering: "it's so hard for them when they discover that this equality they've been told about is a carrot on a

stick – something that’s dangled in front of their noses to keep them going, but always kept just out of reach” (284).

Even a fusion of the visions of dreamers of different races seems to be against the tenets of imperialism as can be seen in the case when the similar visions of a new society in Sir Daniels and the Marichjhāpi settlers receive different responses in *Tide*. And thus we find the characters and events in Naipaul and Ghosh heading to entirely opposite directions where for one Salim discovering a Roman quote that forbids racial intermingling in Naipaul, we have a startling discovery of a medieval inter-continental trade that encouraged inter-racial bonding on political, economic, cultural, and even familial grounds in Ghosh. Likewise for one grotesque marriage that brings the former masters and slaves together in Naipaul as in the marriage of Marcus’s son and his English bride, we have the passionate and loyal couple in the First Princess and her servant, Mohan Sawant, in *Palace*. For the apprehensive observation of Salim of a possible connection between the middle-aged European pilot and the little African boy beside him at the airport in *Bend*, we have Ghosh envisage a Zindi running across the globe with Boss in her arms in *Reason*.

These unequal bonds for Ghosh is not a sign/cause/effect of the degeneration of the more powerful race, but the last few traces of an alternate history other than the one created by the Europe while erasing the rare world of harmony, equality and freedom that was against Europe’s military and hierarchical character. Thus it is also natural in Ghosh that he does not lament over the death of the Empire and decay of its relics, while these are the preoccupying concerns with the characters in Naipaul. As the narrator of *Enigma*, Salim or Willie visits the imperial centers in Europe, especially England, they cannot but notice the decay that has set in there while the encroachment of the post-colonial world into the former glory of imperialism only saddens them.

The narrator of *Enigma* is often lost into the maze of the former glory, wonder, and power of the imperial England only to come back to the harsh reality of the present when he learns how after the death of Mr Phillips the manor has lost its last good servant while the new servants cannot even serve wine to their master in a proper way. Likewise, Willie too in *Magic* learns from Roger that the servant class is now almost extinct in England because of a faulty national policy of funding the poor that Roger finds harmful for both the poor and for the country. Quite interestingly, Ghosh too has similar episodes on servants – though set in different contexts and viewed from different angles. For example, in *Palace* he shows the extent of the degradation

that the Burmese Royalty had been pushed into exile where the Royal ‘slaves’—granted freedom by the British when they invaded the Royal Palace—disintegrate into the chaos of exile. Besides, with the local servants who appear unable to follow the customs of the Royal Palace such as the ‘shikoes’ (crawling while serving the Royalty) properly, the Royal family is gradually lost into the squalor of the slum-like settlement of the servants in Ratnagiri.

It is as if Ghosh here provides an unintended ironic answer to Naipaul’s observations on the racial intermingling and the resultant decay by suggesting that not only the West destroyed an ancient culture of mutually benefitting inter-racial exchange, its imperialistic operations were also responsible for the decaying hybridity of dissimilar cultures, races, classes, and religions in the colonies. As Ghosh further indicates, the non-Western world, perhaps because of its inheritance of the ancient culture of racial intermingling, had not only survived the forcible colonial intermingling, it at times even internalized it successfully and profitably. But when the unaccustomed West is caught into the boomeranging effects of its own doings, it could not survive it—and hence the Marcus-es and the resultant decay perceived by Naipaul.

Although Naipaul can find decay everywhere in the once reigning Empire and is much saddened by this, Ghosh never displays any such emotion in his novels except the ones of an opposite kind at times, such as in the case of the “great blue mansion built by the French in Mahé in *Reason* that remains unapologetically forgetful of its great builders whose mention ‘bored’ its residents. Similarly, in *Palace* when Jaya finds, “hidden in the undergrowth”, the “small stone memorial to her great-uncle, the Collector”: she also sees, not with sadness but with the detachment of a historian, that “The engraved lettering was worn thin by the combined effect of wind, water and sand” (493). Likewise, in *Tide* we find that although the colonial enterprise of Sir Daniel in the Sundarbans was in decay because of an unsympathetic land, environment and authorities, the struggles of various kinds like Nilima, Nirmal, Moyna or the Marichjhāpi settlers keep the eventful place beyond any deteriorating decay.

The most surprising event in this context is however shared with us by Ghosh in *Antique* where he narrates a legend from Egypt. The story tells us how once the tomb of the holy man, Sidi Abu-Kanaka, was opened after a long time people found “that the Sidi’s body was still whole and incorrupt, and that instead of being affected by the

decay of time, it was giving off a beautiful, perfumed smell" (139), thus writing back to Naipaul's sadness at finding the decaying memorials, manors and civilization of an empire that once ruled the world.

This view of the dying empire however, also turns the migrant/exile in Naipaul's novels towards self-examination as he finds himself to be a partial reason and effect of this decay: although it is the sight of the mass immigrants that disheartens him most as he finds that this reverse colonization by the innumerable immigrants from former colonies is destroying the host countries. However, the central character-cum-traveler in Naipaul, as represented in the Mediterranean story based on the Chirico painting in *Enigma*, never appears free of his colonial past. The journey into the imperial centre undertaken by the traveler in Naipaul thus appears extremely self-conscious while the effect of the travel on the characters seems pre-determined. Salim's tone in *Bend* thus is less wondrous and more condemning when he looks at the vast number of migrants from different countries in London, and finds them to be "cut off from the life of the great city" and engaged in meaningless petty ventures like selling cigarettes, "seemingly imprisoned in their kiosks, like puppets in a puppet theatre", while he wonders "about the pointlessness of their own hard life, the pointlessness of their difficult journey" (269). Ghosh's tone is however more celebratory when in *Reason* he describes al-Ghazira that had on the sides of its roads "Iranian chelo-kebab shops, Malayali dosa stalls, long, narrow Lebanese restaurants, fruit-juice stalls run by Egyptians from the Sa'id, Yemeni cafés . . . as though half the world's haunts had been painted in miniature along the side of a single street" (344).

Moreover, although the travelers in Naipaul like Salim, Indar, Nazruddin, Willie, and the narrator of *Enigma*, travel from the colonies to the Europe and eventually settle down there; they feel themselves different from the other non-Western migrants who they find to be mostly parasitic and a disgrace to the grandness of their host country/city. Thus whether it is Nazruddin on the Arab immigrants in England, Salim on the faceless migrants in London, Indar on the disgraceful Indians at the India House in London, Willie on the immigrants from Indian subcontinent who seem to gobble up London, or the narrator of *Enigma* who comments on how "the barbarian peoples of the globe, people of forest and desert, Arabs, Africans, Malays" travel to cities like London to learn about model civilizations (154)—all these Naipaulian travelers find the hordes of parasitic immigrants responsible for the degeneration of

the cities like London with their barbarous manners and customs that they refuse to leave behind even when crossing the threshold to enter these great cities.

Ghosh however reserves the image of a parasite either for the European migrant masters as for example when in *Palace* he literally evokes the images associated with the term 'colony' of parasites while describing the transformation of the Royal Palace in Burma by the invading British; or for the neo-colonial dictators as like in Burma, growing out like fungus "of the foundations of the system that had been left behind by the old Imperial Government" in Burma and "sucking the life from its host" just as the old system did (535). Unlike the romantic, eurocentric and self-exiled narrator of *Enigma* by Naipaul, the exile in Ghosh too appears different at times. Ghosh's *Palace*: for example displays the tragic exiles in the Burmese Royalty—King Thebaw who has nothing else to do but sitting at the side of his window with his binoculars all day in Ratnagiri, and Queen Supayalat who fade into oblivion when forcibly exiled to India by the British while the English seem to be conquering the world (or in the Queen's eyes, plundering the world) away from home.

Although critics like King, Nixon or Weiss have never failed to point out the migratory nature of the characters in Naipaul's fiction, the attributes and effects of this migration on these characters' observations of the societies they come from or travel to have always remained a matter of debate. For example, the usual effect of dislocation, as it results in the loss of identity in the traveler, is quite problematic in Naipaul, though no less in Ghosh. Thus while Naipaul's characters like Salim, Willie, or the narrator of *Enigma* appear to suffer from a loss of identity even before they undertake their journey; they also seem to have a pre-determined notion of the societies they observe which their travels only re-confirm. Salim's initial observation of the self-destructive nature of the Africans and the civilizing presence of the Europeans in *Bend* is thus eventually confirmed by the time a traumatized Salim finally leaves Africa for England.

Willie and the narrator of *Enigma* too go through similar journeys, as their disappointment with their colonial homeland of half-lives and the adulation for the European civilization since their childhood are eventually validated by their later travels. Thus the characters in Naipaul in a way remain trapped between their colonial past and the allure of a future life in Europe, as symbolized by Salim's most valuable documents in *Bend*: "my birth certificate and my British passport" (78). This is this fractured identity that they inherit as colonial subjects and that precedes their travels

and displacement: as in Weiss's words, "None of these characters truly belongs in his community or society: each tends to observe rather than act, and through those observations of others, experiences new territories of seeing and feeling". But as the 'observations' offered by these travelers in Naipaul are highly controversial, Weiss also goes on to add, "Whether Naipaul's characters do see clearly is moot, but a character like Salim does seem to choose to be nothing, to live without a fixed social identity, in order to be a watcher and an evaluator of others and thus to know them (or have the illusion of knowing them)" (217).

Undoubtedly, as Weiss and others too find, the clarity of vision in Naipaul's travelers remains questionable: but even the observation by these critics that these Naipaulian travelers decline a "fixed social identity, in order to be a watcher" might as well appear misleading as the migrant in Naipaul like Salim, Willie, or the narrator of *Enigma* undeniably try to belong to a 'fixed social identity'. Naipaul always presents his migrant as an upholder of the civilization and culture of the imperialist Europe although the migrant's efforts to integrate into this imperialistic civilization always turn out to be a lifelong pursuit, that in turn reminds us of Arjun's observation in *Palace* regarding the futile attempts of the colonized to enter the imperial domain.

Anyway, what we should note here is that whether it is Indar, Salim, Willie or the narrator of the *Enigma*, Naipaul's migrants too want to view themselves as a traveler with a penetrating vision and "a man without a side" --traits that they believe to have acquired following their dislocation and migrancy (*Bend* 178). In Ghosh however we do not have any illustration of the concept of the loss of identity following a dislocation as in his novels the traveling characters are shown to be engaged with a continuous process of the formation of a new identity while undergoing displacement.

This in fact introduces another important difference between Naipaul and Ghosh in the context of migration and exile as unlike in Naipaul, the characters in Ghosh are not provided with the luxury to choose the time and course of their migration/exile. Thus whether it is Rajkumar who ends up in Burma as an orphan to start a new life; Dolly who is compelled by the circumstances to follow her masters in exile; the Burmese Royalty who are sent to exile after being defeated by the British; Alu who has to run across continents to flee a persecuting state government; Piyali whose vocation as a cetologist takes her to the farthest corners of the globe; or the economic migrants who leave Egypt in search of a better livelihood—each of these characters in Ghosh is presented as following a course of migration/exile that is beyond her/his

control. This powerlessness however cannot discourage the traveler in Ghosh from combining his/her role both as an observer of societies and people, and as an architect creating new identities for him/herself. While the traumatic circumstances leading to the migration/exile never let these travelers celebrate these new identities constructed by themselves in their migration/exile; they do not deposit their fractured identities in the country they travel to either as like the travelers in Naipaul.

The preconceptions that the characters in Naipaul are shown to possess are further related to their choice of destination of their self-directed course of migration and exile. Salim, Indar, Nazruddin, Willie or the narrator of *Enigma* are all shown as predisposed to leave their colonial land of birth as they are eager to arrive at the imperial centre of Europe—the great city of London—that they believe will provide them with a life of dignity instead of the half-lives that their colonial land of shame and defeat had destined them to. But as it appears, caught in the no-man's-land between their colonial past disowned by them and the elusive world of the West that they try to 'rejoin' as a former colonial; the migrant/exile in Naipaul is an eternal traveler on a journey between his past and future. He is a soul permanently self-exiled in his present state of movement in the continuity of time and experiences. The migration and exile in Naipaul is thus never able to produce any significant effect on the traveler as his is a travel that begins with a set of preconceived, fixed notions and never finishes its course as the destination remains ever elusive. Consequently, the unfinished course of journey remains unable to challenge/change those fixed notions in the traveler.

The traveler in Naipaul however also demonstrates that the initial effect of a migration brings out the worst in the non-Western migrant's nature, as can be seen in Willie's fabrication of a factitious identity for himself or in Salim's adulterous and degenerate relationship with Yvette. Thus as Indar describes a non-Western traveler at his first moment of contact with the West: "When we land at a place like London Airport we are concerned only not to appear foolish. . . . we are concerned only to let people see that we can manage and are not overawed. We might even pretend that we had expected better. That is the nature of our stupidity and incompetence" (165).

This kind of a passive role adopted by a traveler whose travels reaffirm his previous notions and traits has been variously criticized by the critics such as Kerridge. He disapproves of the way the genre of travel writing discourages a traveler who wants to become a part of the world he is visiting by relinquishing his role as a

passive observer: "Travel writing deserves hard questioning in these terms when it presents the journey as a search for an experience that will change the protagonist, only to edge its way around the opportunity and bring the traveller home, unscathed, unchanged" (167). Ghosh however proves Kerridge wrong as unlike in Naipaul, the traveler in Ghosh always undergoes a number of significant, and at times crucial changes in his/her character and world view as a result of the migration/exile.

Furthermore, as far as the destination and the objective of migration are related, the migrant in Ghosh also seems to follow an opposite direction as compared to the traveler in Naipaul. As for example, Piya and Kanai in *Tide* migrate to the Sundarbans from their metropolitan centers to support the islanders in their striving for a better life while the restless Piya eventually finds her home there and Uma in *Palace* comes back to India from Europe to join the nationalist movement in her motherland after living abroad for almost twenty years. Similarly, Dantu, also known as Hem Narain Mathur, migrates to the rural India from the city of Calcutta to work among the poor as a socialist in *Reason*. But it is the migration of Alu, Zindi and Kulfi across continents in *Reason* as they try to flee from the unrelenting pursuit of Jyoti that can be considered as the representative of the course of migration in Ghosh's novels. Thus, quite significantly, in this novel the migrating group quite soon discovers that even uttering the words "We're going west" brings misfortune to them.

Nevertheless, whether it is towards east or west, the migrations and exiles in Ghosh always occasion a profound impact on the lives of the travelers that again prove a decisive factor in determining their future course of actions. Thus we have King Thebaw who is transformed into a spiritual godfather of the town Ratnagiri where he is exiled to from the obscurity of his earlier life as a shadow of the Queen; Rajkumar who becomes a successful though imperialistic trader following the footsteps of the Europeans in Burma although a later migration to India leads him towards a greater self-awareness to help him come to terms with the dark side of his nature; Dolly whose ceaseless displacements and migrations eventually lead her to forsake the material world for becoming a nun; the Indian soldiers in the British Indian army who are transformed from unquestioning puppets into self-conscious rebels while traveling to other countries; the economic migrants like Nabeel or Ismail who lose their vitality and cheerful nature to age prematurely following their experiences in the alien country; Alu, whose migrations enable him to finally renounce the self-delusional half-world he had inherited from Balaram; Jyoti, whose

series of migrations lead him to adopt a life to be spent in pursuit of birds he had been dreaming of since his childhood; or Kanai and Piya whose experiences in the Sundarbans irreversibly change their lives. And this just as well may explain why Willie, who comes back to India after nearly two decades with a dream of participating into a social revolution, has to return to England as disillusioned in *Magic*; while Uma who too returns to India after nearly two decades to join the nationalist movements finds self-actualization through her efforts in *Palace*. That this difference between the self-realization of these two characters occurs not just because of their belonging to two different stages—colonial and post-colonial—in the life of a nation, as Naipaul seems to suggest at times, is clear from these two characters' responses to their travels. Thus while Uma's self-criticism and the resultant modifications in her thoughts and beliefs like her shift of philosophy from violence towards non-violence indicate a flexible world view, Willie simply appears to be preoccupied with certain preconceived notions regarding India and Europe that he is determined to prove to himself and to the world as valid.

Another aspect of the issue of migration and exile that differentiates the travelers in Naipaul and Ghosh is something that has become inseparable from the post-colonial scene: the mass migration involving within its ambit the political refugees, economic migrants and the occasional scenes of an epic exodus. The literary genres and criticism have also come under attack by many post-colonial critics on this particular issue as can be seen with Kaplan who has pointed out how the concept of the individualized romantic exile still dominates the arena of literature and criticism. She also points out how in the post-colonial world of flux and displacement, where "the modern experience of forced or voluntary movement has been widespread and diverse, the metaphors and symbols used to represent displacement refer to individualized, often elite, circumstances" (4).

As Kaplan believes that "considering the material histories of immigration is only one way to destabilize modernist myths of travel" (5), we find that such a perspective is quite absent in Naipaul although Ghosh prominently displays it in his novels. While Angela in *Enigma* had led a young Naipaul to attempt a naïve and romantic portrayal of economic migrants: an occasional look at the hordes of mass immigrants—Arabs, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans—in England and Berlin in *Bend* and *Maggie*, and the African immigrants like Percy Cato and June in *Half* by the central characters in the novels leads them to be labeled as parasitic. Moreover, the

mass immigrants are often found by the characters in Naipaul to carry their barbarous customs and culture into the host country in the West that not only prevent their successful integration with the European culture and society but also negate the possibility of their harmonious and enriching co-existence with the Western world view.

While the narrator of *Enigma* in Naipaul informs us about his adolescent plan to write the story of Angela and her migrant friends that never materialized; Ghosh seems to finish what Naipaul had contemplated on these obscure mass migrants. Thus in *Reason* we have the story of Zindi—who like Angela is as full of life and zest and like her is also the soul of the group of her migrant friends. Besides, like Angela who is the manager of Earls Court in Naipaul, Zindi too manages a boarding house in al-Ghazira where she had migrated to from Egypt. Likewise, for another such casual reference to the immigrants whose abilities are exploited though they are always kept at a disgusted distance in their host country like Percy Cato in Naipaul; we have the moving story of the Egyptians migrants like Nabeel and Ismail who have to live in as hostile a foreign land like Iraq in Ghosh. In the same vein, while we have the unregenerate Arab immigrants in *Bend* or the Asian immigrants in Cricklewood in *Magic* appear as a threat to the essence of London; in *Tide* we have the poignant story of the Marichjhâpi settlers told by Ghosh from their perspective

Thus what makes the mass immigrants different in Ghosh and Naipaul is not only whether they are allowed to tell their story or whether they are kept at the margins; but also the point of view from which they are looked at. While in Ghosh the immigrants are shown as powerless nonentities in the hands of various colonial or neo-colonial powers; in Naipaul they are often portrayed from a eurocentric perspective that shows them as greedy opportunists beckoned by the benefits of a Western society

Besides, we also find Ghosh suggesting that the practice of mass migration was in fact introduced by the imperial West for its own convenience though later it found the consequences of its past action to have come to haunt it in the form of what Pratt has termed as a 'reverse migration' into the West from the former colonies. Thus the mass immigrants, lost in the obscurity of history and exploitation, are brought to life by the sympathetic perception of the Burmese King in *Palace* when he looks at the Indians brought by the English to Burma to do the lowly jobs for them like carrying the nightsoil for which they could find no one in a rich and proud country like Burma:

“What vast, what incomprehensible power, to move people in such huge numbers from one place to another -- emperors, kings, farmers, dockworkers, soldiers, coolies, policemen. Why? Why this furious movement -- people taken from one place to another, to pull rickshaws, to sit blind in exile?” (50).

As for the scenes of an epic exodus, while these are completely absent in the fictions of Naipaul that are dominated by the travels of an individualistic exile: Ghosh presents these in each of his novels with all the colossal loss of life and human dignity involved. Thus we have the accounts of the Long March of 1942 from Burma to India in *Palace*; the flight of the Egyptian workers from Iraq in *Antique*; the journey of the Bangladeshi refugees from their government camp in central India to the island of Marichjhāpi in *Tide*; and the exodus of the refugees fleeing a war ridden Bangladesh to arrive at Lalpukur in *Reason*.

Ghosh however never forgets to incorporate the human interest in his description of the exodus of epic proportions by giving the mass an individual face, thereby combining a personal and historical account in these descriptions. Thus we have a Rajkumar or a Nabeel in the crowd of the exodus who does not let the episode to remain just another incident in the history of human displacement: while through their individual experiences Ghosh also holds the direct or indirect effects of imperialism and neo-colonialism to be responsible for this massive displacement. Therefore, when Thème observes that Ghosh’s “concern with the recuperation and rendering of individual experiences operates against the kind of totalising theory that habitually consigns subalternity to oblivion” (qtd. in Hawley 16-17), we find that it is not only the faces in the crowd that he is referring to but also to “those who constitute the footnotes of history” (Bose 18) like Bomma, Kishan Singh, Karthamma, or Fokir.

Although Ghosh always views history (both national and personal) from the subaltern’s eyes: Naipaul is often found to be unwilling to do so by critics like Neil Lazarus or Landeg White, who believe there is no African perspective on events in Naipaul. Champa Rao Mohan too finds that “Far from speaking for or making the subaltern speak, Naipaul has only muffled his voice” (110). Contrariwise, as Ghosh presents not only the voice of the subaltern, but also his hybrid identity that comfortably carries different worlds within itself without putting them in hierarchies: he also seems to represent the stories/characters in his text that Naipaul seems to marginalize in or exclude from his. Thus although the characters like the Burmese Royalty, the old Majik, Fokir, Piyali, Kanai, Dolly, and Shombhu remain absent in

Naipaul's novels; the supposed end of the futile struggles of a defeated Zabeth in *Bend* finds its continuation of a striving towards an optimistic future in the migrations of a determined Zindi in Ghosh's *Reason*. Júlio the carpenter's daughter in *Half* too eventually comes back in the form of Kusum and Moyna in *Tide*; while an embittered Nazruddin in Naipaul is replaced by a Rajkumar whose experiences in the post-colonial world makes him more humane in Ghosh. Similarly, a pathetic Marcus in Naipaul becomes a poignant Karthamma in Ghosh; and a vacuous and shiftless Ildephonse in Naipaul grows up into a successful entrepreneur and national hero in Ilongo in Ghosh.

Ghosh, nevertheless, balances these kinds of portrayals by marginalizing those characters that are given prominence in Naipaul's novels. Thus, unlike Naipaul, Ghosh does not highlight the neo-colonial forces like a Bhudeb Roy or the military junta as the failure of decolonization; and he also transforms the figures of Salim, Willie, or the narrator of *Enigma* into a significant but a minor character like that of Beni in his novels. There are at times inversions of the portrayals of the characters as well in these two novelists, as for example the parasitic character of Metty in Naipaul – who although tries to evolve, but in his marriage and lowliness of character only disappoints Salim – finds another kind of expression in the character of Dolly, a slave like Metty and infuriating her masters just as much by her marriage and attempts at breaking free, but who nevertheless remains a saintly figure in the novel by Ghosh. The character of Indar too seems to reach its culmination in Arjun who eventually comes to realize the extent of the disfigurement caused by the unseen hands of imperialism and protests against it in his own way.

Although both Ghosh and Naipaul have made clear their dislike of being termed as post-colonial writers to state that they espouse no particular political stand through their writings; that their works often negate their stand is also noted by their critics. As Rukmini Bhaya Nair comments: "It is true that Ghosh often describes himself, *a la* Naipaul and Seth, as an a-political writer, but the text of *The Glass Palace*, for example, seems to contradict this bland self-portrayal" (172). Leela Gandhi too observes the post-colonial perspective in Ghosh in *Antique*: "From his vantage point as an Indian in contemporary Egypt, Ghosh observes (with rising panic) the imaginative and temporal impoverishment of the postcolonial world which surrounds him, and in which he is implicated through the shared experience of colonisation" (67).

As regards Naipaul, that every work of his rises out of his colonial experiences in Trinidad is made clear both from his own words on various occasions and by the observations of the critics like Singh: "Naipaul's work is the formation of a literary practice born out of implosive conditions of post-colonial historical, cultural and political divides; European imperial and colonial history, its shifts and eruptions leading to deracination and displacement of migratory people" (240). Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, on the other hand, find the element of post-colonialism in Naipaul in his belonging to a 'complicit postcolonialism' as opposed to the 'oppositional postcolonialism'. The two critics have observed that Naipaul, like Charles Harpur, Marcus Clarke, and Christopher Brennan, is a 'complicit' post-colonial in the sense that he sees "the civilizing values of modernity as imperialism's positive, reconstructive and basically humane face" (qtd. in Singh 42).

However, that Ghosh too challenges the already established notions and practices of the post-colonialism as we know it is clear from his texts. Thus in Ghosh we find the refusal of his characters like Rajkumar, Saya John or Balaram to follow the traits of the typical mimic men, alongside the ambivalences in his novels that refuse to offer any solution to the various post-colonial issues such as the worth of a self-destructive protest to colonialism as by Arjun, or the irresolution of the argument between Piya and Kanai on the conflict between nature and man.

John Skinner points out an important aspect in Ghosh that differentiates him from most other post-colonial writers in his refusal to categorize the colonial or the post-colonial world into a simplistic binary division of a West and an East as Ghosh's concern is "not only with the coloniser and colonised, but with both historical and contemporary relations between different colonised groups. Not so much 'the empire writes back', then, as 'the empire writes home'" (qtd. in Hawley 17). Rakhee Morai too agrees with Skinner as she finds that Ghosh's realization of a counter-discourse being eventually destined to be marginalized because of its limited focus prevents him to attempt an act of solely 'writing back' in his novels. Rather, what she believes is that Ghosh is "at once a postcolonial, whose sense of native history and time is inseparable from the long years of dominion, and the multinational hybrid whose acculturation allows effortless identification with the world of the colonizer" (Bose 153).

At times Ghosh and Naipaul have also been put into the context of Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak's provocative suggestion that an Indian writer in English

strategically places the East-West division to mimic the fragmented subject of imperialism though now *his* authorial voice is the dominating figure that is capable of bringing the claims of civil society into the limelight. Therefore a text like *Palace*. Rukmini Bhaya Nair argues in the context of this refusal of the writers like Naipaul and Ghosh to be categorized as a post-colonial writer, provides a representative example of “exactly the sort of ‘contestatory’ politics of the novel-as-postcolonial autobiography/ travelogue/ fiction that Spivak appears to have in mind” (172).

Gauri Viswanathan makes another startling observation on Ghosh as a post-colonial novelist when she claims that Ghosh actually adopts a neo-colonizing approach in *Antique*. She finds this neo-colonial act to be manifested in the novel when “The interrogator is interrogated for the bizarre practices of his own culture, and the frustration of being unable to explain either himself or his culture causes the narrator to veer off into another project, another narrative, this time of a twelfth-century Jewish merchant and his Indian slave” (qtd. in Hawley 95).

Samir Dayal, on the other hand, has another explanation for Ghosh’s digression from his anthropological narration to the imaginative reconstruction of the lives of Ben Yiju and Bomma in *Antique* as he thinks that Ghosh takes the help of fiction while attempting an anthropological unearthing of Bomma as he was “somewhat disillusioned with the capacity of a scientifically pure social anthropology to capture the full-lived truth about the Slave” (qtd. in Hawley 103). The hybridity of the text thus, for Dayal, does not arise from Ghosh’s desire to silence the interrogating subjects of his study but to let the already silenced subaltern speak. In Ghosh’s own words: “My essential interest is in people and their lives, histories and predicaments. There is not much room for this in formal anthropology, which is more interested in abstractions and generalisations. So I realised very early that I did not share the basic concerns of anthropology and that fiction was my proper *métier*” (Ghosh Interview 7).

Ghosh however also admits to carry within himself the occasional orientalist attitudes as when he realizes how he formed the wrong notions about Egyptian rural women from reading the books though later he is embarrassed to find it wrong; or when in the famous episode with the Imam, Ghosh realizes he too, like the illiterate rural Egyptians, nurtures a eurocentric world view. While all these factors, along with an irretrievably erased history threaten to raise doubts about the possible success of Ghosh’s attempts to retrace the travels of Ben Yiju and Bomma in *Antique*, Ghosh addresses these doubts in a unique way in *Tide*. Thus we find in *Tide* that Kanai loses

the diary of Nirmal— the only account of an event where the dream of a marginalized group and their struggle to live differently were crushed by a neo-colonial authority—in the turbulent sea in the Sundarbans. As the diary is swept away by the tides, Ghosh seems to suggest that the possibility of recovering the history of the subaltern might always remain a mirage: although with Kanai—a migrant translator, and thus the only person capable of attempting such a recovery—coming back to the Sundarbans to rewrite the lost diary from his memory also ensures that the subaltern will eventually be heard.

Anyway, in spite of Ghosh's realization in *Antique* that both he and the Imam were traveling in West in their construction of self and the other, Robert Dixon believes otherwise. As Dixon points out, Ghosh learns village Arabic instead of the prestigious European languages, spends years interacting with the Egyptians peasants to situate his books within rural Egypt “instead of affiliating his text with high theory”, and also employs the East-bound orientation in his historical and anthropological research. All these observations finally make Dixon note that “In Philadelphia, Amitav Ghosh might be travelling *in* the West, but his sly civility ensures that he is not travelling *with* the West” (34). That Ghosh is not travelling with the West is further proved by his attempt to recover the voice of the marginalized in his novels—whether it is the story/history of Bomma, the stories of mutiny by Kishan Singh, the diary of Nirmal or the Bon Bibi book in the Sundarbans.

While Naipaul too appears to occasionally register the voice of the marginalized in his novels; these voices are eventually proved to be deceptive, at times even fake, as for example the leaflets by the Liberation Army, or the ‘postcolonial’ book of stories by Willie. May be this is why Naipaul finally decides to leave the subaltern wordless—as like the maid in Joseph's quarter who never utters a single word and is observed as a subhuman figure by Willie.

Furthermore, as it appears, Naipaul does not believe in the concept of the subaltern or the marginalized; to him there are only two terms for the citizens of the Third World, one being the ‘pure natives’/ the ‘primitive’—who are “insufficiently improved, hopelessly backward” and the other being ‘the mimic’ / the ‘*évolués*’—who “ape the metropolitan values, rather than absorbing them, and so become living parodies of civilization” (Nixon 110). This in turn leads Nixon to observe that “Naipaul thus couches primitivism and mimicry as antipodes that, between them, contain the spectrum of Third World cultural identities. By resorting to this imperial

catch-22, Naipaul forecloses rhetorically all possibility of affirmative cultural identities, self-respect, and productive cultural interchange" (110). As Naipaul finds only a static society in the former colonies, Nixon points out that the sheer act of putting up a resistance to the colonizer while striving for a new cultural and national identity on the part of the colonized not only proves it beyond doubt that the post-colonial societies are not static, but also that the 'scope and validity' of the category 'primitive' is no longer valid in the post-colonial world (114). Even Naipaul's claim that the colonized have no history except the ones preserved/created by his imperial master is also invalidated by Nixon as he shows how the anticolonial resistance has now forced the West to acknowledge that the colonized had indeed possessed a history. This history is still alive in the form of the marginalized, though not obliterated, tales—as like the stories of the mutiny by Kishan Singh in Ghosh—that were kept alive by the very continuation of the imperialism as the imperial masters used to remind the natives these stories whenever the empire was threatened.

Anyway, it cannot be denied that Naipaul's acerbic description of decolonization in the former colonies has led many critics to laud what they think is a penetrating insight into the neo-colonial forces at play in the former colonies. As for example, Singh finds that in Naipaul the "questions of power and authority once directed at the classical empires of Britain and France are now thrown at despotic successor regimes" in Africa or Asia (172). Nixon also disagrees with this view on Naipaul as he remarks "On a superficial reading, his emphasis on the continuities between the colonial condition before and after formal independence might appear to support the theories of neocolonialism advanced by Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, and Julius Nyerere, among others, in the 1960s." But as Nixon goes on to add: "examined more closely, Naipaul's "colonial" comes back to look more like neocolonial's antonym. Naipaul points repeatedly to the "colonial's" abdication of responsibilities as a fundamental cause for the ailing condition of many Third World societies" (139).

Likewise, although Bruce King suggests that Naipaul is as critical of the European civilization as of the non-Western ones (204); Nixon thinks otherwise on this too: "Naipaul's angle, ingenious yet perverse, screens out the violent decrepitude of London and Birmingham's inner cities as well as . . . of the north. . . . Ruin, in its unpopulated, bucolic English mode, becomes a ruminative, poetic affair, where in the Third World it made him irascible and accusatory" (163).

Naipaul thus remains a brilliant example of a post-colonial writer who displays all the possible contradictions involved in the scene. Thus while the master narrator unfolds the sweep of a colonial history in his grand narratives, he also displays his eurocentric vision in the process: while he never fails to note the defeat and humiliation in the life of the colonized, he seems to hold him responsible for his defeat; while his eurocentric, migratory self yearns to 'rejoin' the panacea of civilization, he never feels at home in the West.

As Singh observes, Naipaul has not only introduced us to an "original and groundbreaking method of archaeological and intellectual perceptions and dimensions to study a pattern of history, the order of things, civilizations and their break-up, a post-colonial agenda of re-working the subtle operations of power and freedom, the fate of revolutions", but most importantly, has also shown us "the hybridized realities of a new world order in the ongoing debates and strategic political shifts in what promises to be a post-globalized scenario" (242).

Naipaul and Ghosh, thus whether in their denial to be categorized as post-colonial writers and then producing texts that negate this denial; or in the hybridizing of their texts that untailingly mark them as post-colonial novelists, are more complementary to each other than a look at their contradictory differences would admit. As Rukmini Bhaya Nair sums it up for us: "Ghosh's *political* opinions may differ markedly from Naipaul's ultra-conservatism, but as *writers* they 'belong' to the same postcolonial mode – juggling genres and ancestries and seeking redemption through literature from the enthrallment as well as thralldom of a colonial language and history" (172).

That these two post-colonial writers have attempted different travels across histories of nations and memories of individuals to reach the same shore, is evident and can be expressed by borrowing the very words of Naipaul when in *Enigma* he remarked on the travels he and his fellow passengers undertook: "Though we might have travelled on the same Fyffes banana boats, the *Cavina*, the *Golfito*, the *Camito*, what different journeys we had made!" (165).