

CULTURAL CONFLICT AND DISINTEGRATION IN V. S. NAIPAUL'S *A FLAG ON THE ISLAND*

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Abstract:

Immigrants have always faced dilemma of cultural disintegration. The conflict to preserve 'own' culture has led to bewilderment and disillusionment in them. The Indian Diaspora writers have given voice to these 'never chronicled' tales in their works. A Flag on the Island is set in Trinidad majorly and through various stories, the lives of Indian immigrants in the colonial Trinidad, the cultural conflict and socio religious disintegration that they face is portrayed by V. S. Naipaul. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the genre of short story as perfected by the Indian Diaspora writer V. S. Naipaul and trace the essence of Hindu culture as showcased through 'brahminical' Hindu rites and rituals in the selected stories of Indian immigrants. The stories undertaken in this paper delineate the reoccurring symbolic representations of Hindu religion and culture, involving puja i.e. prayer, funeral rites, gods, deities, clothes and food. The paper aims to bring forth the deeper nuances of immigrant experience in the genre of short story writing as portrayed by Naipaul.

Keywords: *Indian Culture, Hindu rites and ritual, Cultural disintegration, Dilemma, Identity.*

A Flag on the Island (1967) is the collection of eleven short stories; the last one in the collection is named same as the title 'A Flag on the Island', it is a long story and is considered as a novella. Naipaul's stories in A Flag on the Island depict the dilemmas of colonial existence, pain of being rootless, and the eroding traditional structures of the Asian immigrants in Trinidadian society. The stories are interrelated with respect to the characters which are mostly Hindu immigrants stranded by fate in Trinidad, these stories bring out the fears and suffocating existence of these entrapped individuals in an alien land. The pain of being trapped is brought forth through the different treatment of these stories and the characters. The suffering and agony depicted is not only physical but more psychological. Naipaul is a deft master in unleashing the skirmishes going through the mind of an individual. Each story leads to the deep gorging into the mind of its characters which are trapped and are uneasy in their lives. Stories represent ironic perspective on the lives of people living in the colonial era. The condition and atmosphere in the schools of that time, economic upheavals, changing political order, racial discrimination, compartmentalization of the society with respect to ethnicity of an individual and poverty are the multiple themes which are studied across the width of this short story collection.

Each story is an individual saga of psychological state of the individual and at the same time it echoes the painful cries of caged souls of colonised people. Naipaul sermonises the psychological states of these individuals and the futility of human endeavour to seek the harmonious existence in a chaotic state of affairs. The stories are spread over the various overlapping themes and problems that the Indian immigrants faced during the colonial times in Trinidad, rightly remarked below:

The stories compel the reader to connect the reader with the dilemmas generated in more particularly, second and third generation immigrants seeking to rebuild their lives. The architectonics of Naipaul's major concerns are forged in several of the short stories in this anthology, though it must be pointed out that such intertextual linkages no way distract

from independent achievements of the stories themselves. (Rai 117)

An Overview

“Self-reflexivity from the perspective of a text or rather the writing of a text is a heightened awareness about its own conditions of existence” (Mander 175). The stories bring out the painful aspects of the author's personality through his childhood to the young age as third generation immigrant in Trinidad. The stories, 'The Raffle', 'My Heart' and 'My Enemy' reveal the anxieties of the childhood which a tender mind of child goes through, a theme which is persistent with Naipaul. The stories demand the contemplation on the relationship of a child with his parents amidst the problematic living conditions of the colonial world. The agony and stress which a child goes through in those painful colonial times cannot be put on their parents entirely but the circumstances that encased their lives at that time are more questionable.

“Mr Raffle” is a story of a schoolboy Vidiadhar, who becomes favourite student of the strict teacher Mr Hindis. Mr Hindis took pride in his being a teacher and through his clothes, which Mr Hindis was very careful about, the colonial influence becomes very conspicuously visible, as “... cigarette between his lips, his tie flapping smartly over his shoulders It was a wine-coloured tie: Mr Hindis was careful about the dress. That was something else that somehow added to the terror” (FI: 25). Though Vidiadhar enjoyed this favour initially but later he had to suffer considerably. Mr Hindis was a poor school teacher and his strict demeanour was in total contrast with his domestic life which was very ordinary and poverty ridden. There comes a humorous turn of events when Mr Hindis bestows Vidiadhar a goat. Initially Vidiadhar feels privileged but later it was discovered that the goat did not yield milk and it was Mr Hindis' deliberate strategy to get rid of the useless goat. Vidiadhar and his poor mother suffer considerably due to the goat; as a result they decide to abandon it. Mr Hindis after knowing about this brutally whips innocent Vidiadhar. Poor Vidiadhar feels humiliated and torn. The story reveals exploitation of the students by school teachers in a colonial school system, where there was no communication between the higher and the lower authorities, No sympathy and no humanity. The children of immigrants from India thrived in inhumane, deplorable and filthy conditions. These traumatic conditions had profound effect on the tender minds of children. Naipaul has made a deep probing into this psychological effect of colonialism through his stories, like 'The Raffle'.

Another story in the line is “My Enemy”, where problematic relationship between a boy and his mother is delineated. It opens with an emotional intensity, the conflict between father and mother leads to a deep crisis on the psyche of a child. The basic cause of the conflict between the husband and wife is equally difficult to position in the grim scenario. It is a colonial set up where this immigrant family was no longer safe as they were under the continuous threat by workers of the Cunupia estates. The wife insisted to leave the place and move elsewhere, but the husband refused to leave his house. Later she rebelled and moved to her mother's house but son did not leave his ailing father alone. On one fateful night his father dies due to weakness, poverty, prolonged isolation and illness; subsequently the boy moves to his mother's place after losing his only friend, his father. The mother had always been harsh to him and she took out her frustrations on the boy by thrashing him on every menial issue. The boy started to look upon his mother as his enemy. The turning point comes in this hostile relationship when the boy gets his arm injured badly one day and on seeing her son in pain mother weeps and hugs him close.

I looked at her tears, and felt I was going to cry too. I had discovered that she could be worried and anxious for me. I wished I were a Hindu god at that moment, with two hundred arms, so that all two hundred could be broken, just to enjoy the moment, and see again my mother's tears. (FI: 87)

This story has autobiographical element too, “The story develops from the marital conflicts of Naipaul's own parents stemming from culturally sanctioned divide between 'the mother's side' and 'the father's side' of Naipaul's family” (Rai 2007: 119). The story captures the perceptions of a child and the

traumatic affect of poverty and hostile colonial living conditions on the harmony of a family life and its psychological renderings on the minds of the victims of this historical (mis)endeavour of the West. "My Heart" is next story of a child and his fantasies, his own whims and his own way of taking out his frustrations. The story revolves around Hari and his pet dog. Hari suffers from heart ailment and he is not allowed any physical exertion which may prove fatal for him. Hari is very fond of sports but due to his physical disability is kept much protected by his rich parents. Hari has his own struggles, more emotional than physical. During school he is kept off the swimming club, later he suffers an attack from Alsatian dogs, though the dogs did not bit him but he had to remain hospitalised for many days as he fell unconscious during this chase, these all encounters lead to a strong desire for strength and authority in Hari. On his birthday his mother gifted him puppy and Hari developed a very complicated relationship with his pet dog over the period of time. We read in the story that Hari traumatises and beats his pet brutally when he was alone with it; he tries and even succeeds in getting control over the dog. This all was his way to take revenge on those who bullied him. Naipaul unfolds the theme of embarrassments, identity and lure for power in a child through this story and the preceding two stories, "The Enemy" and "The Raffle" as discussed before. These stories revolve around the psychology of a child, who constantly tries to prove his worth. His emotions are bruised brashly in the colonial world where adults take out their own frustrations on the children. The result of these humiliating and painful encounters is the disintegration of the integrity of these children, who do not grow into normal mentally balanced adults. The stories significantly point toward the traumatised aspects of the childhood in the colonial world. They also symbolically point towards that childhood is not a trivial or just a passing thing that could be ignored so easily. The repetition of motif of childhood is significant in these stories. It represents suppressed, helpless class of society that is has no access to expression, and is muted by the power of the physical force.

The stories 'My Aunt Gold Teeth' and 'A Christmas Story' fall in the line of religious censorship, which is one another favourite theme in Naipaul's works. These stories deal with the obsession with religion and the religious practices. The conflicting canvas of both the religions, Hinduism and Christianity, in the colonial Trinidad and the immigrant's reaction to these conflicting nuances has been explored in both these stories, but quite differently. There is an acceptance as well as rejection to these both faiths by the immigrants. The story, 'My Aunt Gold Teeth' narrates the adventures of narrator's aunt who is fat and rich lady and has practically got gold teeth fixed, hence the name Aunt Gold Teeth. She belongs to Hindu Brahmin immigrant family and has everything but is childless. Her husband Ramprasad is a strict practicing Brahmin, but Aunt Gold Teeth believes that Hinduism and its puja (Hindu form of prayer) have not been effective enough to give her a child. Owing to the forces of Presbyterianism that was prevalent force during those times, she starts believing that Christianity is much stronger faith and there on start her flirtations with Christianity. She hides her trysts with Christianity from her husband, and suddenly her husband falls seriously sick. She takes up all the blame on herself and accuses her going out of Hindu faith as the reason for the condition of her husband Ramprasad. She deploys a professional mystic Ganesh to ward off the evil she had done but it was to no avail. Ramprasad's condition deteriorates and he dies; Gold Teeth's own mother accuses her for her involvement with Christianity and thus bringing in impurity of false religion to their Brahmin household. The story brings out the superstitions of the Hindu orthodox culture and it powerfully exposes the blind-illogical faith of Aunt Gold Teeth. It also underscores the cultural and religious changes that gradually crept into the orthodox but close knit Hindu families of Trinidad. The Hindu practices, rites and rituals like majority of works of Naipaul have been detailed in this story. The people like Ganesh who in the name of religion duped ignorant people like Gold Teeth are also being satirised. "In his professional capacity Ganesh was consulted by people of many faiths, and with the license of the mystic he had exploited the commodiousness of Hinduism, and made room for all the beliefs. In this way he had many clients, as he called them, many satisfied clients" (FI: 17).

'A Christmas Story' like 'Aunt' Gold Teeth' is an attack on the superstitious practices of Hinduism as

practised in the colonial Trinidad. It is story of a convert school teacher by the name of Randolph who has adopted Christianity and who has always felt ashamed of his religion. He feels utter hatred for Hindu practices and he feels embarrassed to think that once he too was one among these. This story is symbolic representation of Presbyterianism and its aftermath on the psyche of the converts. The shame of being once a Hindu forces Randolph to maintain distance from his heathen clan and merge his identity into the 'other' faith. Randolph publically displays his pride in being a Christian and a "civilised" now. He makes effort to keep himself segregated from his Hindu family and relatives. He eats with knife and fork and condemns eating with hands to his Hindu friend Hari, who in turns rebukes and chides him for being an imposter. He calls him a faker who has betrayed his Hindu faith. This is a story of struggle of a convert who lives in a periphery throughout his life and his dwindles between both the faiths, the ensuing bewilderment is contained in the lines below:

But that was not the end of my trials. I had up to that time eaten with my fingers, a manner of eating which is now so repulsive to me, so ugly, so unhygienic, that I wonder how I managed to do it until my eighteenth year. Yet I must now confess that at that time food never tasted as sweet as when eaten with the fingers, that my first attempts to eat with proper implements of fork and knife and spoon were almost in the nature of shameful experiments, furtively carried out; and even when I was by myself I could not get rid of the feeling of self consciousness. It was easier to get used to the name Randolph than to knife and fork. (FI: 37)

Amidst such trifles Randolph keeps his head high but remains secluded from the warmth of his own clan. It is also a story of a failure of a convert; Randolph remains away from the worldly success, while his Hindu friend Hari becomes richer with each passing day. The religious vanity which he displays could not counter check the bitter failure of lagging behind in each sphere of life. He marries very late to a girl who also belonged to a convert family like him. They both far well in marriage and are blessed with a boy but soon Randolph's paucity of funds and passing age comes in the way of their happiness. After his retirement his anxiety about the financial matters grew day by day. His glory as a school master too was now gone after his retirement. He failed in every venture he undertook to generate money for his family's growing needs. He got caught up in huge financial crisis and he feared being caught up by the police, Christmas approached and his wife was busy in all sort of decorations, but Randolph's heart sank with each passing day. In the end the Randolph is saved from the crisis and the Christmas is not lavish but sweet for the family. Naipaul has in this story highlighted the Presbyterianism and its traumatic effect on the psyche of a convert, where the individual lives a rootless and pseudo existence throughout his life as Randolph. It is complete psychological unveiling of the path of conversion that many immigrants had to willingly or unwillingly undergo in the colonial times. The story is dual weapon as it is satire not only the degrading Hindu faith, the superstitious Hindu culture but also on the Christian missionaries which promoted conversion in their colonies.

Naipaul has remarked extensively on the racially segregated society of the Trinidad in the colonial era in his many works like *A House for Mr Biswas*, *The Miguel Street* and *In a Free State*. In *A Flag on the Island* also this bitter reality of the colonial time is rendered through the interlinked stories, 'The Baker's Story' is the next and such one tale which markedly and humorously paints the Trinidadian society of the colonial era, where racial discrimination seemed to be the law of the land, without any check. The unrecorded racial prejudices and painful day to day encounters with racial discriminations which native Blacks suffered in Trinidad are recorded by Naipaul in this story. Like many minute and unrecorded agonising experiences that immigrants and natives had gone through which had been never accounted in the chronicles of the times but only in the works for the diasporic writers like Naipaul, the same brunt of racism finds its voice in this story. The racism crept into every mundane thing of the life of these Asians and Blacks in the colonial Trinidad. The narrator of the story is black young boy who struggles to find

livelihood where setting of the story is colonial and multi-coloured and racial colonised Trinidad. One day finds a small job as, behind the scene worker, in a small Chinese bakery shop. This god fearing young Black boy of twenty three years learned to make bread out of the dough during his time in this shop. He came to know that the dough used to make bread for the rich was far superior to that which was used to make bread for the poor. "But as I was saying this bakery uses to bake ordinary bread for the poorer classes. For the richer classes they use to bake, too. But what they would do would be to collect the dough from those people house, bake it, and send it back as bread, hot and sweet" (FI: 137). One day the Chinese lady owner dies and her old husband decides to close the shop. He relocates to another place least bothering about this young black boy. Now he wandered jobless without anything but only few dollars in his pocket and hands on experience as a baker. He decides to borrow money and eventually opens up a bakery shop. This business venture turned into an absolute failure. Day by day his debt increased and his bakery attracted no customers. An epiphany occurs to him and the humorous ironic twist to the story occurs. He understands that it was his colour that was preventing people to buy bread from him. He erased his black presence and remained content staying behind the scenes, baking bread. He deployed a Chinese boy to serve at the counter of the shop and renamed his shop as 'Yung man Baker'. Eventually his sales multiplied prolifically and he became the richest man in the town. He, in the end is seen as a man who has reconciled with this racial stigmatization as he proclaims. "I never show my face in the front shop again" (FI: 146).

The back entry in the "The Baker's Story" and another story "The Mourners" is symbolic. "The Mourners" is also a psychological revelation. In this story Romesh visits to pay condolence to Mrs Sheila and her husband who is a doctor and who have recently lost their young son, Ravi. Romesh is a poor relative of this rich family and he enters through the back door. He is not offered much respect. The poor relation status was indeed humiliating but had been internalised by Romesh. Though the food served to him was good but it is given to him in the kitchen. The difference of class is again emphasised by Naipaul, where money defines the treatment of one human being by the other. The story deals with psychological awkwardness of the mourners in a very humorous way. Romesh was repeatedly shown big photo album of Ravi amidst the great emotional drama, once by Sheila and second time by her doctor husband again when he arrived after sometime. He sympathised with the couple but his mind was somewhere else, he felt tied up and uneasy in their household. They least cared about Romesh and were money minded.

The next two stories, 'The Perfect Tenants' and 'Greenie and Yellow' are interlinked with the repeated character of Mrs Cooksey. The setting in both the stories is England. In the first one 'The Perfect Tenants' there is a conflict between landlady Mrs Cooksey and her previously much favoured tenants Dakins. The narrator in the story remains uninvolved and simply reports the events that happen in the house of Cooksey's. "Greenie and Yellow" is again a humorous tale; Mrs Cooksey being childless gives all her affection to the caged bird Bluey, which had been gifted to her by one of her tenants who had shifted now. Mrs Cooksey puts all the efforts to make the bird Bluey happy but to no avail. She even brings in two other birds Greenie and Yellow for the Bluey's company but both birds eventually die. Bluey was left alone and its condition improved. This is a parable and both these tales are written in lighter vein. Naipaul's experiments in the genre of short story are most conspicuously visible in *A Flag on the Island*. 'The Night Watchman's Occurrence Book' is written in all together a different style. Naipaul has experimented with both the style and the language in different stories. This story is written in the form of diary entries which have been maintained as a record by the Night Watchman by the name of Hillyard. This is a very short humorous tale, various comic scenes generate due to the gap between the education of both the manager and the watchman.

The last in the sequence is 'A Flag on the Island' titled same as the title of the complete collection *A Flag on the Island*. It is very long story and hence can be termed as novella. This extended narrative is written from the point of view of an American soldier Frankie. Frankie had spent considerable time in the Caribbean Island during World War II, while he was posted there. Now he revisits the Island in an

unplanned sequence of events. He found both familiarity and alienation in the second encounter with the Island. The places seemed familiar to him, but the ways were changed now as the flag has changed now after the island has gained independence. Still the Island was under the shackles of colonialism which was deep rooted in the psyche of the natives. Frankie is a dead drinker and his psychological agony makes his behaviour very crazy at times and he was often in an erratic mood. The drinks heavily and it is also attributed to the pain he experiences as he is not able to get over his past and connection with the Island which he so strongly feels. He revisits the places where he had lived and looks for the presence of colonial days on those landmarks. There is an array of the characters in the story that live the anchorless existence. Mr H. J. B White is one such character who is a black native writer and educationist but he is the perfect example of colonial influence even after the Island had gained independence and we see “An Interesting reiteration of the black writer who works with white models reappears in the shape of H.J.B. White in Flag on the Island” (Gupta 2010: 5). The name Mr H.J. Black White in itself is symbolic of the existence which is half and half, the colonial influence and mindset which has been conditioned to colonial ideologies is his white self, where as the culture and natural upbringing is his black self. He is both black and white and is representative of the dual existence of the natives who have long been under the colonial regime.

An Analysis

Cultural Intersections and Conflicts

Naipaul's *A Flag on the Island* encompasses the various shades of colonial Trinidad through the eleven stories that are included in this short story collection. The stories touch multiple themes of colonial subjugation of Indians who were taken as indentured labour to Trinidad by the British as well as it also echoes about the trauma of colour discrimination meted out to the native Black Trinidadians, as aptly remarked below:

Both the Asians and the Blacks, whether here, in Britain, Europe, in the US, are stigmatised, inferiorised, discriminated against and excluded from the good things in life. They are kept well outside the white boundary- in jobs, in housing, the media, training, health services, as well as in their status, honour, dignity and upward mobility. (Mullo 223)

Along with Racism, Religious and Cultural Conflict is the main theme in these stories. The aftermath of religious and cultural conflict between the Hindu immigrants and Christian missionaries promoting Presbyterianism is brought forth in the stories “My Aunt's Gold Teeth” and ‘A Christmas Story’. The conflict between both the cultures and religions is marked yet the intermingling of the faiths is unavoidable for immigrants who are in minority and living away from their origins. Naipaul has represented the Hindu Brahmin faith as largely superstitious and orthodox. The values inherent in the faith are treated as degrading in an alien land, yet the cultural and religious codes are pursued meticulously in day to day life. Naipaul's engagement with Brahmin ritualistic codes and conducts is noted in the stories, as Ganesh in ‘My Aunt's Gold Teeth’, carries the elaborated ceremony at the home of Ramprasad to purify the sanctity of Hindu religion,

‘Bring me some ghee,’ Ganesh said, and after Gold Teeth had done so, he set to work. Muttering continuously in Hindustani he sprinkled the water from the brass jar around him with mango leaf. Then he melted the ghee in the fire and the charcoal hissed so sharply that Gold Teeth could not make out his words. Presently he rose and said, ‘You must put some of the ash of this fire on your husband's forehead, but if he doesn't want you to do that, mix it with his food. You must keep the water in this jar and place it every night before your front door.’ (FI: 16)

Aunt Gold Teeth is shown totally disillusioned by the Hindu faith and it's all about the paraphernalia of prayers. She is not able to bear a child, despite her rigorous religious pursuits with Hindu gods. She gets influenced by the Christianity and resorts to step out of the, “Lakshman Rekha” i.e. religious binding of stepping out of one's faith, to get her wish fulfilled. Aunt Gold Teeth's challenging the orthodox

bindings of her religion and Brahmin code of conduct are viewed as the chunks in the cultural cocoon of immigrants. The inflow of other faith is inevitable in such circumstances. It leads to deep feeling of guilt where one's identity is felt challenged and unsafe. The cultural cushion is permeated by the foreign cultural forces. The cultural conflicts are very much evident in "A Christmas Story" too, where Randolph moves one step further to Aunt Gold Teeth. He unlike her comes out openly, denouncing Hindu religion, he becomes a complete covert by embracing Christian faith. Such conversions were not only disturbing and challenging for the individual itself but conflicting for the whole clan. The following lines markedly echo the cultural and religious conflict going on in the mind of Randolph, who had converted recently to Christianity,

At this time I was invited to the wedding of Hori's son, Kedar. They marry young, these people! It was an occasion which surmounted religious differences, and it was a distinct pleasure to me to be again with the family, for their attitude had changed. They had become reconciled to my Presbyterianism and indeed treated me with respect for my profession, a respect which, I fear, was sometimes missing in the attitude of my superiors and even my pupils. The marriage rites distressed me. The make shift tent, the coconut palm arches hung with cluster of fruits, the use of things like mango leaves and grass and saffron, the sacrificial fire, all these things filled me with shame rather than delight. But the rites were only a small part of the celebrations. There was much good food, strictly vegetarian but somehow extremely tempting; and after a period of distaste of Indian food, I had come back to it again. The food I say was rich. The music and dances were thrilling. The tent and the illuminations had a charm which not even our school hall had on concert nights, though the marriage ceremony did not have the grace and dignity of those conducted, as proper marriages should be, in a church. (FI: 39)

My life thereafter was a lonely one. I had cut myself off from my family, and from those large family gatherings which had hitherto given me so much pleasure and comfort, for always, I must own, at the back of my mind there had been the thought in the event of real trouble there would be people to whom I could turn. Now I was deprived of this solace. (FI: 38)

Naipaul represents the whole trauma of these conflicting cultural temporalities through psychological analysis of Randolph as well as his Hindu friends in the lines above. Such grave cultural and religious conflicts tear apart an individual's anchorage and existence. They uproot him and lead to deep psychological trauma and ensuing psychological disintegration. The whole order of cultural cohesion falls apart for these immigrants owing the strong forces of Presbyterianism, which lead to the overall conflicting existence. In the story "The Enemy", the religious intermingling seems to have found its way gradually into the day to day life of the immigrants; such changes were unavoidable in the multicultural society. The following lines from story 'The Enemy' exhort the peaceful reconciliation of both the faiths, Hindu and Christian, unlike that of Randolph in the story 'A Christmas Story': "My father began hanging up words of hope on the walls of the house, things from the Gita and the Bible, and sometimes things he had just made up" (FI: 80).

Naipaul has brought forth problematic living of the immigrants in the Trinidadian society of the colonial era, where an immigrant is torn between preservation of his own cultural baggage, as well as the forces of religious conversion which were so prevalent during those times. Naipaul has represented Hindu faith as outdated, orthodox and largely superstitious which makes yielding to the forces Christian missionaries more natural nevertheless disturbing. It also presents satirical take on Christian missionaries who almost hypnotised the Indian immigrant people, allured them and blackmailed them for greener pastures, filled them with hatred for Hinduism and allured them to Christianity as we read in lines below:

Here the Canadian Mission had longed waged war against the Indian heathen, and saved many . . . Presbyterianism was not the only danger the good Hindu had to face in Cunupia. Besides, of course, the

ever present threat of open Muslim aggression, the Catholics were to be reckoned with. Their pamphlets were everywhere and it was hard to avoid them. (FI: 14)

Later she acquired two holy pictures, one of the Virgin Mary, the other of crucifixion, and took care to conceal them from her husband. The prayers she offered to these Christian things filled her with new hope and buoyancy. She became an addict of Christianity. (FI: 15)

Thus, two opposite cultural pulls and its affect on the psyche of immigrants like Randolph is clearly delineated by Naipaul in a realistic and very subtle way.

Discrimination and Disintegration

The conflicts were not only cultural but even racial, and were not only for Asian immigrants but are also much more challenging for the Black natives. They were considered good for nothing in their own land as we read in stories like, 'The Baker's Story' and 'A Flag on the Island. Doomed to live a second-hand and filthy poor life, their psychological journey through those dark colonial times is represented by Naipaul in the stories, 'The Enemy', 'The Raffle', 'A Baker's Story' and 'A Flag on the Island'. Colour discrimination and that too in one's own land is quite questionable and non-acceptable, yet the poor black natives swallowed this humiliation just for the sake of filling their empty stomachs. The colonial society of Trinidad which forms backdrop of most of the stories is seen as mostly segregated and disintegrated by the economic disparity too. The exploitation is painful and even more extreme is the psychological trauma that humiliation inflicted on the Indian immigrants and Blacks. Majorly the stories are the psychological probing into the minds inhabitants of the Trinidadian society of the colonial times. The following lines from 'The Baker's Story' picture the racial discrimination and segregation of colonial society of Trinidad owing to economic disparity and colour politics, "I ask Percy why he didn't like black people meddling with his food in public places. The question throws him a little. He stop and think and say, 'It don't look nice' (FI: 145). Naipaul has used the language that natives actually used, "Is how it is with black people. They get so use to working for other people that they get to believe that because they black. They can't do nothing else but work for other people" (FI: 141). Even the changing order which we witness through the story of Frankie an American soldier in the last story 'A Flag on the Island' is equally conflicting and adds more confusion to the state of affairs. The blacks still were controlled by Western whims and power, even after gaining freedom their mind is under the rule of White colonials.

Mr Black White, a writer writes only about the Whites and Western locales, He is convinced that nobody will read his stories if written about the black people and their island. All the characters mimic the baseless identities which no longer exist but only in their minds. They are not able to overcome the Western awe which is deeply engraved in the psyche of these natives. Their present situations are delusional and fake.

The Flag on the Island, therefore is the easy emblem for the made up, manufactured quality of the Island's independent "identity", engaging as it does in a simplistic representation of the multiracial composition of its inhabitants, rather than a culturally authentic amalgam of its locally bred hybrid traditions. (Mustafa 108)

Naipaul enquires and questions the deeper and darker realms of the minds of his characters. The schools and childhood are the persistent site of psychological explorations of the colonial hegemony in majority of his works, as an example Anand in *A House for Mr Biswas*, school is the site for proving his worth, similarly Willie in *Half A life* was under the awe for English education and culture, He hid his identity of being a Dalit in the school. Through the motif of school which symbolically represents colonial authority and the childhood which symbolically represents the colonised self of an immigrant, Naipaul explores the pain of being subjugated and controlled. The poverty stricken Vidiadhar in the story "The Raffle" is exploited by Mr Hindis, his school teacher. He is thrashed just for not being able to keep his goat. The rather intelligent and brilliant boy Vidiadhar loses interest in his studies and started escaping school owing to this humiliation. Naipaul brings forth deeper and more hidden psychological pains that are

inflicted by control of power and subsequent humiliation of the weak. The result of this discrimination is definitely psychological disintegration.

The majority of the stories like 'The Enemy' and 'My Heart' through the psychology of child lead to a sensitive psychological delineation of pain inflicted by humiliation and hegemony of the weak class by the powerful class. The following lines from "The Raffle" describe the humiliation and its disintegrating affect on the psychology of Vidiadhar, who is symbolic and representative of the life of children of poor immigrants'

'Good. Come up here.' He went to the locker and took out the soaking leather strap. Then he fell on me. 'You sell my goat?' Cut. 'You kill my goat?' Cut. 'How you so damn ungrateful?' Cut, cut, cut. 'Is the last time you win anything I raffle.' It was the last day I went to that school. (FI: 29)

To conclude, with the last story "A Flag on the Island", where even after gaining independence still the Island is under the clutches of colonial powers, though passively. Rightly remarked here that the place now acquired a mimic status, "Henry's place and its elevation into an elite tourist "cultural" nightclub, and Priest's metamorphosis from preacher to insurance salesman to radio announcer and advertiser, all attest the groundless "mimic status" that each has achieved" (Mustafa 108). Though the desire to have something of own which is not borrowed and which ratifies the true independence is also echoed in the following lines said by native black writer Mr Black White,

'No sooner exists,' he said, 'then we start to be destroyed. You know Frankie, I begin to feel that what is wrong with my books is not me, but the language I use. You know, in English, the black is adman bad word. You talk of a black deed. How then can I write in this language?'

'I have told you already. You are getting too black for me.'

'What we want is our own language. I intend to write in our own language. You know this patois we have. Not English or French, but something we have made up. This is our own. You were right. Damn those lords and ladies. Damn Jane Austen. This ours, this is what we have to work with. (FI: 204,205)

The above lines have summed up all the disillusionment during colonial and later its postcolonial aftermath. The independence is also half attained till the psychological shackles of colonialism bind the mind. Mr. Black White is representative of the change that is ought to be brought.

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