



**V. S. NAIPAUL'S EXCURSIONS INTO THE
THIRD WORLD: A POSTCOLONIAL READING
OF HIS TRAVELOGUES**

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

IN

ENGLISH

BY

FIRDOUS AHMAD MIR

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

PROFESSOR SAMINA KHAN

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (U.P.) INDIA**

2018



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PROFESSOR SAMINA KHAN
email: khansamsanina@yahoo.co.in



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, AMU ALIGARH-
202002 (UP) INDIA.**

Phone: +915712700-920, 922

Extension: 1425, 1426

E-Mail: dept_english@rediffmail.com

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CONTENTS

Certificates

Annexure: I-III

Dedication

List of abbreviations

Acknowledgements

TITLE	PAGE NO.
Introduction	1-15
Chapter I Culture, Travel and Imperialism	16-41
Chapter II Naipaul, Clash of Civilizations and Resurgence of Empire	42-73
Chapter III Islam, West, and V. S. Naipaul's Construction of Islam as a 'Threat'	74-108
Chapter IV Naipaul and India's Islamic History: An Assessment	109-130
Conclusion	131-136
Bibliography	137-143

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email: khansamsanina@yahoo.co.in



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A.M.U, Aligarh- India

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Abstract

This thesis titled “V. S. Naipaul’s Excursions into the Third World: A Postcolonial Reading of his Travelogues” is an attempt to situate V. S. Naipaul’s travel narratives in the late twentieth century political context. The last few decades of the last century saw the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the sole super power. This global empire and the Israeli settler colonialism in historical Palestine came into a direct conflict with some of the Muslim countries in the Arab and non-Arab world. The Iranian Revolution, the rise of Taliban, the NATO bombardment of Libya, and the first Euro-American invasion of Iraq during the Gulf War brought the spectre of “Muslim hordes” back to the consciousness of the Western world. Old Orientalist clichés, images, stereotypes, and representations of Islam and Muslims as “backward”, “irrational”, and “anti-intellectual” got a new lease of life in Western mainstream media and culture. It is in this context, I argue, that Naipaul’s representation of Islam and “the revival of Islam” as “rage”, “neurosis”, and “parasitic” in his Islamic travelogues complements the ideological construction of the “clash of civilization” thesis which pits “Islam” against the “Universal Western Civilization”. I have argued that this representation of “Islam” as a threat to the “Western civilization” functions as the contemporary version of nineteenth century colonial discourse. It gives legitimacy to the neoimperial and colonial policies of US-Israeli Empire in the Muslim world.

Although Naipaul has written great works of literary fiction in which he is said to have become an interpreter of the postcolonial world, his travel writing has garnered a reputation as a mandarin possessing a penetrating, analytical understanding of the ills of the Third World societies. Anglo-American mainstream scholarship popularized him as an “expert” on Islam. People began to consider him a political authority on Islam and “the revival of Islam”. Clearly, Naipaul’s prestige as a great novelist assisted him in sustaining his new image as an interpreter of postcolonial societies in general and Islamic world in particular. This diversion into the field of open political opinions about Muslim countries, where Euro-American alliance had deep colonial and neoimperial concerns, gave him a new reputation as a mandarin and an institution. His travel books and journalism began to overcome the attention that his fiction had received earlier. People in the West began to read him in order to understand what goes on in the Muslim world. His information and description of “rage of Islam”, that was said to be spreading throughout the Muslim world at the time of American Empires standoff, began to be considered more important and accurate

than Middle Eastern studies experts. It is in recognition of his 'insights' into the world of Islam that the Manhattan Institute invited him to give a lecture on the "fanaticisms out there". The lecture was titled "Our Universal Civilization" in which he assured his hosts that "Islam", an uncompromising form of 'imperialism', leads to the destruction of those societies, and the Western civilization will emerge victorious and vanquish the rest of the world. It is in this context that Rob Nixon writes about Naipaul that "

I assume throughout what follows that an understanding of his almost programmatically negative representation of formerly colonized societies is inseparable from the question – at once institutional and textual – of how he has secured a reputation in Britain and the United States as the foremost literary commentator on the so-called Third World. (Nixon 6)

I argue that his standard evocations of the former colonies as "barbarous", "irrational", "neurotic", "fantasy", "without history", "parasitic", and "mimic", and or the West as "our universal civilization" that gives a sense of "vocation", "responsibility", "individualism", "intellectual", "creative", "rational", "dynamic", "open" and "tolerant" are assimilable to late twentieth century imperialist discourse, a tradition that runs deep in Britain and the United States. On the one hand he has reproduced the most standard colonial and racial positions and on the other he has been able to present himself as someone who swims against the current ideological positions to tell the "truth" about the former colonies. In other words, and because of his prestige as an "expert" and interpreter of former colonies, his writings are suffused with opinions about the barbarism and dishonesty of Islam, cannibalism in Africa, and simpleminded irrationality of Indians. Although Naipaul has acquired a reputation as an unconventional writer in the Euro-American world, I maintain that his writings about Islam are full of old-fashioned Orientalist ideas, stereotypes, tropes, and images that, like the work of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, function as late twentieth century imperial discourses.

The basic idea that I explore in this dissertation by analysing V. S. Naipaul's representations of Islam and Muslims in his travelogues is that far from living in an after- or post-imperial world, the political and economic relations between different nations are still determined by hegemonic imperial power structures. These relations are underlined by the continuing presence of colonial discourses about different cultures and peoples. Though the mid-twentieth century nationalisms of Asia and Africa succeeded to end the direct Western

domination of the major portions of the non-Western world, settler colonialism intensified in other parts exactly at the time when we were supposed to have entered into the era of the 'postcolonial'. Along with settler colonialism, neo-imperialism, particularly in the form of neoliberal economic policies of international financial institutions headed by United States of America, has engulfed the poorer countries once again. After the Second World War and in the 'postcolonial' period United States of America donned the imperial robes of a super power as an heir to the nineteenth and early twentieth century European empires. The countries of the Third World though are politically independent, but in many ways are as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by European powers. In this context I make an attempt to critically analyse the continuing usage of the idea of 'postcolonial' as a conceptual category to characterize the contemporary world and the relations between different nations. I argue that there is a need to theoretically relook at the relevance of the term 'postcolonial' considering the increasingly hostile attitude of the only super power, USA, towards the world in general and the Islamic world, in particular.

This project maintains that though for the most part the previously colonized countries have won their political independence, many of the imperial attitudes and structures of feeling underlying colonial relations continue. These structures of feeling support, elaborate, and consolidate the practice and position of empire. I emphasize that the imperial formations have continued to linger not only in political and economic practices but also in general cultural practices of metropolis. I take up Saidian ideas to argue that imperialism and its colonial forms are perpetuated by cultural forms ranging from poetry to novels, dramas, history, anthropology, geography, mainstream media and travel narratives etc. I apply to V. S. Naipaul Edward Said's writings on culture and imperialism to show that modern imperialism does not depend for its survival only on tangible material things like war and aggression. Rather it is enabled and then perpetuated by an idea, a discourse, a universalizing worldview and impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination that certain people are inferior and are in need of civilization from the West. In this context my thesis purports to show that when it comes to writing about Islam and Muslims one finds that in writers like V. S. Naipaul there is no intellectual break with the eighteenth and nineteenth British ideological framework mostly represented by Orientalism. In other words, I posit the view that writings about Islam, like that of Naipaul, act as the contemporary equivalents of nineteenth century colonial discourses. In addition to this I maintain that the production of cultural forms in metropolitan

centres cannot be understood without also apprehending the imperial setting itself within which culture takes form.

The thesis revolves around the idea that the “principle dogmas of Orientalism exist in their purest form today in studies of the Arabs and Islam” (300), and these permeate the diverse artistic and scholarly endeavours ranging from Hollywood, mainstream news channels and documentaries to novels, travelogues and academic studies of Islam. These dogmas that structure Western representations of Islam and Muslims are recounted by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* as:

One is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, underdeveloped, inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a “classical” Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore, it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically “objective”. A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible). (Said *Orientalism* 300-1)

This is the basic theoretical framework that I employ in my analysis of V. S. Naipaul’s representations of Islam and Muslims in his travelogues. Following in the footsteps of Said I trace the involvement of a particular kind of cultural form called travel writing/travelogues in the enterprise of colonialism. Colonial discourse theory makes us aware about the complicity of cultural and academic forms in modern forms of colonialism, capitalism, and hegemonic power. Like many other artistic and cultural expressions, the genre of travel writing too has been read from the perspective of subaltern peoples, highlighting its complicity with the colonial discourse. It has been argued by theorists like Mary Louis Pratt, Peter Hulme, and Benita Parry that “travellers, explorers and adventurers were scouts for imperialism, mapping the terrain, signposting potential sources of wealth, marking physical hazards and warning of unfriendly natives” (Parry 149). In his article

“Imperial Design and Travel Writing”, Jack Warwick points out that the individual travellers coming from the imperial centres were encouraged to publish accounts of their journeys into countries which were deemed available for colonization. These writers make it abundantly clear that we can no longer ignore empires and the imperial context in our studies of the metropolitan cultural forms. In order to better appreciate V. S. Naipaul’s travelogues about Islam and Muslims I have used the above discussed conceptual framework to trace their affiliation with the imperial ideology of late twentieth century Euro-American Empire.

One of the arguments of my thesis is that though Naipaul’s earlier novels gave expression to postcolonial identities and aspirations, especially of the diasporic communities, there occurred a marked shift in his ideological orientation. According to Patrick French, V. S. Naipaul stopped writing about postcolonial societies from the perspective of the subaltern nations. This ideological shift occurred during the 1970s and 1980s when, according to Edward Said, erstwhile radical writers and philosophers like Foucault began a conservative turn (Said *Culture and Imperialism* 29-30). It is the same period when neoliberal economic system and political liberalism of Western democracies intensified its war against Soviet Union, enlisting the support of authoritarian and unpopular Arab monarchies in the process. Western cultural and political onslaught, under the leadership of United States of America and through international institutions like International Monetary Fund, World Bank and NATO, began to reassert its global power. From Latin America to Korean Peninsula, and in Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Libya, American military industrial complex began to attack the nation states which had gained independence from European colonialism after the devastation of the Second World War. During the period of Afghan Jihad against Soviet Union, Iranian Revolution and first Gulf War, the area studies experts and mainstream media think tanks in the Euro-American academic world began to publish their analysis of Islam’s relationship with the Western world. Western scholars like Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, Sania Hamady, Raphael Patai, Harold Glidden and other American Arabists began to marshal their academic standing in the power canthers to explain the so-called “Arab mind” to the world. The idea was that if you peel off the external and secondary influences of history and personal experience, an unchanging and transhistorical category called “Muslim” and “Arab” will show itself in its true colour. In other words, Arabs and Muslims are treated as fixed, stable, in need of investigation, and even in need of knowledge about themselves. As Edward Said reminds us in his seminal investigations of the Western representations of the Orient in *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam*, these Western think tanks and mandarins

resort to age old and hackneyed Orientalist clichés to account for the causes of the immanent political conflicts between Muslim nation states and Euro-American powers. I argue in my thesis that it is in this context that V S Naipaul has written his two travelogues titled *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief* about four Muslim majority nations during the later three decades of the twentieth century. I argue that instead of presenting a dispassionate picture of the social, economic and political changes occurring in these Muslim countries, Naipaul uses the Orientalist tropes and images to formulate his theory of what he calls “parasitism” of “Islam” and of “Muslims”. He also develops the idea of a “Universal Western Civilization” as opposed to the non-West, particularly Islam. Like the nineteenth century Orientalist writing about Islam, he also uses water-tight binaries like ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, ‘West’ vs. ‘Islam’ in order to formulate his own version of clash of civilizations thesis. I maintain that Naipaul has many ideological similarities with Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, two other proponents of clash theory.

My contention in the thesis, as said earlier, is that like Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, Naipaul too operates within the overarching ideological apparatus of Orientalism that circumscribes the boundaries of what can be said or written about Islam and Muslim cultures. I have particularly focused on his construction of “Islamic fundamentalism”, his thesis of conversion leading to neurosis of Muslims, his idea of Western Judeo-Christian world as representing a ‘Universal Civilization’, and especially his contribution to the formulation of the ‘clash of civilizations’ paradigm. I have used scholars like Tariq Ali, Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, William Dalrymple, Hamid Dabashi, Ranjit Hoskote, etc. to bolster my claim that Naipaul’s understanding of Islam’s relationship with the West is based on the nineteenth century colonial historiography of Islam. My thesis provides a critique of V. S. Naipaul’s formulations by arguing that the modern cultural theory teaches us that cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous. Cultures and civilizations are not fixed, unitary and monochromatic. They are so interrelated and interdependent as to beggar any unitary or simple delineated description of their individuality. By following Said’s work on the modern Western scholarship about Orient and Islam, I argue that Naipaulian attempts to “force cultures and peoples into separate and distinct breeds or essences exposes not only the misrepresentations and falsifications that ensue, but also the way in which understanding is complicit with the power to produce such things as the “Orient” or the “West”” (Said *Orientalism* 349).

In exploring Naipaul's intellectual authority, I have chosen to focus on his Islamic travelogues and some other related material. Because, as I have argued, it is there that we encounter his most Orientalist and politically charged accounts of his understanding of the Islamic world. Furthermore, because of their frequently inflamed polemics, Naipaul's nonfiction, particularly related to Islam, have met with a more acutely divided reception along First World-Third World divide. The vigor of the debates sparked by Naipaul's work and his 'insight' into the Islamic world for his readership in the Euro-American world, have ensured that he is no longer simply viewed as a writer, but as embodying a set of politically charged ideas about Third World-First World relations. For this reason, and because Naipaul's obsessive concerns repeat themselves across the decades and across the globe, I have not followed a conventional development-of-the-author approach. Instead, I have designed my thesis around a series of Naipaul's recurrent fixations and ideas.

An Overview of the Chapters

In the Introduction of this thesis I have briefly talked about Naipaul's works and the critical reception of his *oeuvre*. I have maintained that his writings on Islam and Muslims function within the overarching colonial discourse of Orientalism and, like the theories of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, work as contemporary colonial discourse that justify Euro-American neoimperial power structure.

Since my claim is that cultural forms like travelogues cannot be explained without taking into consideration the larger political, historical and imperial context within which travel and travel writing takes place, in my first chapter titled "Culture, Travel, and Imperialism" I give an account of how and when was Asia subordinated by European colonial powers. I point out that the colonized spaces were not only politically and economically subjugated; their cultural, spiritual and intellectual life was also disrupted and looked down upon by the colonial powers. I argue that colonization altered not only their economies but their ways of life, feeling, and their structures of thought were also changed. I maintain that though physical and psychological violence is at the heart of colonialism, the legitimizing discourses are formed in and through cultural expressions. I post a deep symbiotic relationship between colonial power relations and cultural forms that narrativize the colonial setting and ideology.

Chapter II is called “Naipaul, Clash of Civilizations and Resurgence of Empire”. I argue that Naipaul’s construction of the binary between ‘universal’ West and ‘parasitic’ Islam is a part of late twentieth century Orientalist discourse represented by people like Lewis and Huntington. It is argued that during the last decades of twentieth century American interventions in the Muslim world were part of the neoimperial power relations that were forming during and after the end of the Cold War. In such a situation, I maintain, Naipaul’s representation of Islam as ‘reactionary’ and ‘anti-modern’ and West as an “open” and “universal civilization” has given credence to the ‘clash of civilization thesis’ that has been used by policy think tanks to influence American foreign policy with regard to the Muslim world. This has created an image of Islam based on the idea of threat, which is subsequently used to justify further military interventions in the Muslim world.

In the third chapter “Islam, West, and V. S. Naipaul’s Construction of Islam as a ‘Threat’” I have argued that V. S. Naipaul constructed the binary opposition between essentialized forms of “Islam” and “West” at a time of intense political unrest between some Muslim nations and the US-Israel colonial policies in the Middle East. His representation of Islam as an uncompromising form of “imperialism” and “colonization” is a projection of aims and methods of US colonial and neoimperial power relations that were accruing during the last few decades of twentieth century. I argue that Naipaul, like Lewis and Huntington, has used old Orientalist clichés to portray Islam as a threat to the valance not only of its adherents but also of the Western civilization. I add that as a new Orientalist, Naipaul performed the task of ‘informing’ the West about culture of Islam so that it would be easy for the Western governments to ‘understand’ and, then, to control the Muslim lands.

Chapter IV is titled as “Naipaul and India’s Islamic History: An Assessment”. This chapter looks at Naipaul’s attitude towards Muslim presence in India, and maintains that his treatment of Islam in India was shaped by the preconceptions and assumptions derived from the history written by historians of the Raj.

Finally, the Conclusion summarizes the arguments and addresses the limits of this thesis. In this thesis I have essentially maintained that the project of anticolonial critique needs to be strengthened and fully articulated, particularly in relation to defining its opposition to neoimperial imperatives today. Instead of purely textual idealism, that has dominated the colonial discourse theory under the influence of poststructuralist and postmodernist insistence on difference, I argue that anticolonial critique would do better if it

brings the hard materiality of history, politics and economics back to bear upon the analysis of cultural forms. However, I would like to mention that this dissertation has not dealt in detail the diverse debates around the politics of representation and the processes of othering. This is one of the limitations of this dissertation. The framework which I have tried to develop here can be further developed if it is applied to other cultural forms like films and cinema, especially films made by Hollywood during and after the Iranian Revolution. Increasingly large numbers of films have resorted to Orientalist clichés to present Muslims as villains and terrorists in movies. The framework of this dissertation can be used to better understand the relationship between those movies and the US imperial policies and actions.

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Bibliography	137-143

INTRODUCTION

Vidyadhar Surajprashad Naipaul (1932-2018) was named after an eleventh century Chindela King, Vidyadhar, who is said to have fought against Mahmud of Ghazni. Later on when he became V. S. Naipaul, he liked the name for its associations: "It's such a grand name, a very special name – I cherished it for that reason. I think great things were expected of me" (qtd in French 8). He was born to the descendants of a Brahman indentured family in colonial Trinidad. When slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire, cheap labor was still needed to work in the sugar plantations. The problem of paucity of cheap labor in absence of African slaves was solved by colonial masters by importing indentured laborers from colonial India. Poor and destitute Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, were brought from India as bonded labourers. This was the society in which Naipaul was born, and he would rise from this situation to become one of the best English writers of second half of twentieth century. As a writer his achievements are diverse and multifaceted. Known for his unimpeachable style, strong power of observation, and minute descriptions of people and things, his novels as varied as *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *The Loss of El Dorado*, and *The Enigma of Arrival* would be read and taught in universities throughout the world. Even Derek Walcott, a frequent critic of his ideas about Africans and Trinidadians, considered him as "finest writer of the English sentence" (Walcott 28). Tariq Ali, who called him a "kind of brown sahib" (Ali 134), had to agree that Naipaul was a very brilliant writer. He was a prodigious writer of both fiction and nonfiction. *A House for Mr. Biswas* was said to have the unforced pace of a master-piece. The novelist Angus Wilson wrote that V. S. Naipaul had joined the "small group of unquestionably first-class novelists" (qtd in French 201). This book was praised as a great illustration of the effects of colonialism and one's desire to find an identity. Tariq Ali quoted Edward Said as saying that "he's much better than many of the novelists who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s – he just writes much better" (Ali 134). Rob Nixon says that "nothing since has equaled the

inventiveness and emotional generosity of that homage to his father's misfortunes in the straitened circumstances of colonial Trinidad" (Nixon 3).

Naipaul, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001, has also written travelogues on the basis of his travels through India, South America and some Muslim countries. *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* are the record of his different travels and experiences in India. *Among the Believers* (1981) and *Beyond Belief* (1998) are the result of his excursions among the 'converted peoples' of four non-Arab Muslim countries: Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, and Malaysia. His journalistic and travel writings have stimulated disagreements. On Naipaul's India travelogues Nissim Ezekiel wrote a spirited attack, 'Naipaul's India and Mine. Patrick French writes that "the sharp Naipauline vision that had arisen from his family background and sound colonial education now appeared to be at odds with current thinking, particularly about what was coming to be called the Third World. In 1969 in *Literature and Ideology*, H. B. Sygne started what was to become a critical trend by calling V. S. Naipaul 'a despicable lackey of neo-colonialism and imperialism' (French 266). Criticizing Naipaul's travelogues about Islam and what he called "the rage of Islam", Edward Said stated that he is a "kind of belated Kipling who carries with him a kind of half-seated but finally unexamined reverence for the colonial order . . . Naipaul the writer now flows directly into Naipaul the social phenomenon, the celebrated sensibility on tour, abhorring the postcolonial world for its lies, its mediocrity, cruelty, violence, and maudlin self-indulgence'. On the publication of *Beyond Belief*, Said would write in *Al-Ahram Weekly* that V. S. Naipaul was

One of the truly celebrated, justly well-known figures in the world literature today. . . somewhere along the way Naipaul, in my opinion, himself suffered a serious intellectual accident. His obsession with Islam caused him somehow to stop thinking, to become instead a kind of mental suicide compelled to repeat the same formula over and over. This is what I would call an

intellectual catastrophe of the first order. (Said in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, August 1998)

Naipaul's views about Indians, Muslims, Africans, and other postcolonial peoples would be highly controversial, and that would cause a rift between his admirers in Euro-American world and detractors and critics in the Third World. The Western world has heaped upon him great literary awards and accolades, among them the Booker Prize, the W. H. Smith Prize, the Hawthornden Prize, the Bennett Prize, and the T. S. Eliot Award, this last honoring authors "of abiding importance whose works affirm the moral principles of Western Civilization" (qtd. in Nixon 3). In 1990, the British Crown knighted him, and Naipaul became Lord Naipaul. Some Western commentators hailed him as somebody who interprets the conditions of the Third World countries and diagnoses their problems better than anybody else. On Islam, he was even considered an 'expert' who had informed the Western readers and governments about the "rage" which was setting Muslim countries on 'boil'. On the other hand, and as mentioned above, he has been criticized by those whose cultures were at the receiving end of his diatribes and acidic provocations. It has been argued that Naipaul is a smart restorer of the myths of the 'superior', white, Western race. His travels have been seen as confirming his Eurocentric biases and ideas. Some others "perceive his knighthood as perfectly intelligible, given that he is England's favorite 19th century Englishman" (Nixon 4). Hamid Dabashi in *Brown Skin, White Masks* coupled him with "native informers" like Dinesh D'Souza, Fouad Ajami, Azhar Nafisi, and characterized him as a comprador intellectual who provide the "newly-globalized service to power" and to "the American Empire" (Dabashi 45). Terry Eagleton complained "great art, dreadful politics" while Kwesi Johnson said 'he is a living example of how art transcends the artist because he talks a load of shit but still writes excellent (qtd. in French xii).

Although Naipaul has written great works of literary fiction in which he is said to have become an interpreter of the postcolonial world, his travel writing has

garnered a reputation as a mandarin possessing a penetrating, analytical understanding of the ills of the Third World societies. Anglo-American mainstream scholarship popularized him as an “expert” on Islam. People began to consider him a political authority on Islam and “the revival of Islam”. Clearly, Naipaul’s prestige as a great novelist assisted him in sustaining his new image as an interpreter of postcolonial societies in general and Islamic world in particular. This diversion into the field of open political opinions about Muslim countries, where Euro-American alliance had deep colonial and neoimperial concerns, gave him a new reputation as a mandarin and an institution. His travel books and journalism began to overcome the attention that his fiction had received earlier. People in the West began to read him in order to understand what goes on in the Muslim world. His information and description of “rage of Islam”, that was said to be spreading throughout the Muslim world at the time of American Empires standoff, began to be considered as more important and accurate than Middle Eastern studies experts’. It is in recognition of his ‘insights’ into the world of Islam that the Manhattan Institute invited him to give a lecture on the “fanaticisms out there”. The lecture was titled “Our Universal Civilization” in which he assured his hosts that “Islam”, an uncompromising form of ‘imperialism’, leads to the destruction of those societies, and the Western civilization will emerge victorious and vanquish the rest of the world. It is in this context that Rob Nixon writes about Naipaul that “

I assume throughout what follows that an understanding of his almost programmatically negative representation of formerly colonized societies is inseparable from the question – at once institutional and textual – of how he has secured a reputation in Britain and the United States as the foremost literary commentator on the so-called Third World. (Nixon 6)

I argue that his standard evocations of the former colonies as “barbarous”, “irrational”, “neurotic”, “fantasy”, “without history”, “parasitic”, and “mimic”,

and or the West as “our universal civilization” that gives a sense of “vocation”, “responsibility”, “individualism”, “intellectual”, “creative”, “rational”, “dynamic”, “open” and “tolerant” are assimilable to late twentieth century imperialist discourse, a tradition that runs deep in Britain and the United States. On the one hand he has reproduced the most standard colonial and racial positions and on the other he has been able to present himself as someone who swims against the current ideological positions to tell the “truth” about the former colonies. In other words, and because of his prestige as an “expert” and interpreter of former colonies, his writings are suffused with opinions about the barbarism and dishonesty of Islam, cannibalism in Africa, and simpleminded irrationality of Indians. Although Naipaul has acquired a reputation as an unconventional writer in the Euro-American world, I maintain that his writings about Islam are full of old-fashioned Orientalist ideas, stereotypes, tropes, and images that, like the work of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, function as late twentieth century imperial discourses.

The basic idea that I explore in this thesis by analyzing V. S. Naipaul’s representations of Islam and Muslims in his travelogues is that far from living in an after- or post-imperial world, the political and economic relations between different nations are still determined by hegemonic imperial power structures. These relations are underlined by the continuing presence of colonial discourses about different cultures and peoples. Though the mid-twentieth century nationalisms of Asia and Africa succeeded to end the direct Western domination of the major portions of the non-Western world, settler colonialism intensified in other parts exactly at the time when we were supposed to have entered into the era of the ‘postcolonial’. Along with settler colonialism, neo-imperialism, particularly in the form of neoliberal economic policies of international financial institutions headed by United States of America, has engulfed the poorer countries once again. After the Second World War and in the ‘postcolonial’ period United States of America donned the imperial robes of a super power as an heir to the nineteenth and early twentieth century European empires. The countries of the Third World

though are politically independent, but in many ways are as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by European powers. In this context I make an attempt to critically analyze the continuing usage of the idea of 'postcolonial' as a conceptual category to characterize the contemporary world and the relations between different nations. I argue that there is a need to theoretically relook at the relevance of the term 'postcolonial' considering the increasingly hostile attitude of the only super power, USA, towards the world in general and the Islamic world, in particular.

This project maintains that though for the most part the previously colonized countries have won their political independence, many of the imperial attitudes and structures of feeling underlying colonial relations continue. These structures of feeling support, elaborate, and consolidate the practice and position of empire. I emphasize that the imperial formations have continued to linger not only in political and economic practices but also in general cultural practices of metropolis. I take up Saidian ideas to argue that imperialism and its colonial forms are perpetuated by cultural forms ranging from poetry to novels, dramas, history, anthropology, geography, mainstream media and travel narratives etc. I apply to V. S. Naipaul Edward Said's writings on culture and imperialism to show that modern imperialism does not depend for its survival only on tangible material things like war and aggression. Rather it is enabled and then perpetuated by an idea, a discourse, a universalizing worldview and impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination that certain people are inferior and are in need of civilization from the West. In this context my thesis purports to show that when it comes to writing about Islam and Muslims one finds that in writers like V. S. Naipaul there is no intellectual break with the eighteenth and nineteenth century British ideological framework mostly represented by Orientalism. In other words I posit the view that writings about Islam, like that of Naipaul, act as the contemporary equivalents of nineteenth century colonial discourses. In addition to this I maintain that the production of cultural forms in metropolitan centers cannot be

understood without also apprehending the imperial setting itself within which culture takes form.

The thesis revolves around the idea that the “principle dogmas of Orientalism exist in their purest form today in studies of the Arabs and Islam” (Said, *Orientalism* 300), and these permeate the diverse artistic and scholarly endeavors ranging from Hollywood, mainstream news channels and documentaries to novels, travelogues and academic studies of Islam. These dogmas that structure Western representations of Islam and Muslims are recounted by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* as:

One is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, underdeveloped, inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a “classical” Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically “objective”. A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible). (Said, *Orientalism* 300-1)

This is the basic theoretical framework that I employ in my analysis of V. S. Naipaul’s representations of Islam and Muslims in his travelogues. Following the footsteps of Said, I trace the involvement of a particular kind of cultural form called travel writing/ travelogues in the enterprise of colonialism. Colonial discourse theory makes us aware about the complicity of cultural and academic

forms in modern forms of colonialism, capitalism, and hegemonic power. Like many other artistic and cultural expressions, the genre of travel writing too has been read from the perspective of subaltern peoples, highlighting its complicity with the colonial discourse. It has been argued by theorists like Mary Louis Pratt, Peter Hulme, and Benita Parry that “travelers, explorers and adventurers were scouts for imperialism, mapping the terrain, signposting potential sources of wealth, marking physical hazards and warning of unfriendly natives” (Parry 149). In his article “Imperial Design and Travel Writing”, Jack Warwick points out that the individual travelers coming from the imperial centers were encouraged to publish accounts of their journeys into countries which were deemed available for colonization. These writers make it abundantly clear that we can no longer ignore empires and the imperial context in our studies of the metropolitan cultural forms. In order to better appreciate V. S. Naipaul’s travelogues about Islam and Muslims I have used the above discussed conceptual framework to trace their affiliation with the imperial ideology of late twentieth century Euro-American Empire.

One of the arguments of my thesis is that though Naipaul’s earlier novels gave expression to postcolonial identities and aspirations, especially of the diasporic communities, there occurred a marked shift in his ideological orientation. According to Patrick French, V. S. Naipaul stopped writing about postcolonial societies from the perspective of the subaltern nations. This ideological shift occurred during the 1970s and 1980s when, according to Edward Said, erstwhile radical writers and philosophers like Foucault began a conservative turn (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 29-30). It is the same period when neoliberal economic system and political liberalism of Western democracies intensified its war against Soviet Union, enlisting the support of authoritarian and unpopular Arab monarchies in the process. Western cultural and political onslaught, under the leadership of United States of America and through international institutions like International Monetary Fund, World Bank and NATO, began to reassert its global power. From Latin America to Korean Peninsula, and in Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Libya, American military

industrial complex began to attack the nation states which had gained independence from European colonialism after the devastation of the Second World War. During the period of Afghan Jihad against Soviet Union, Iranian Revolution and first Gulf War, the area studies experts and mainstream media think tanks in the Euro-American academic world began to publish their analysis of Islam's relationship with the Western world. Western scholars like Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, Sania Hamady, Raphael Patai, Harold Glidden and other American Arabists began to marshal their academic standing in the power canters to explain the so-called "Arab mind" to the world. The idea was that if you peel off the external and secondary influences of history and personal experience, an unchanging and transhistorical category called "Muslim" and "Arab" will show itself in its true colour. In other words, Arabs and Muslims are treated as fixed, stable, in need of investigation, and even in need of knowledge about themselves. As Edward Said reminds us in his seminal investigations of the Western representations of the Orient in *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam*, these Western think tanks and mandarins resort to age old and hackneyed Orientalist clichés to account for the causes of the immanent political conflicts between Muslim nation states and Euro-American powers. I argue in my thesis that it is in this context that V S Naipaul has written his two travelogues titled *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief* about four Muslim majority nations during the later three decades of the twentieth century. I argue that instead of presenting a dispassionate picture of the social, economic and political changes occurring in these Muslim countries, Naipaul uses the Orientalist tropes and images to formulate his theory of what he calls "parasitism" of "Islam" and of "Muslims". He also develops the idea of a "Universal Western Civilization" as opposed to the non-West, particularly Islam. Like the nineteenth century Orientalist writing about Islam, he also uses water-tight binaries like 'us' vs. 'them', 'West' vs. 'Islam' in order to formulate his own version of clash of civilizations thesis. I maintain that Naipaul has many ideological similarities with Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, two other proponents of clash theory.

My contention in the thesis, as said earlier, is that like Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, Naipaul too operates within the overarching ideological apparatus of Orientalism that circumscribes the boundaries of what can be said or written about Islam and Muslim cultures. I have particularly focused on his construction of “Islamic fundamentalism”, his thesis of conversion leading to neurosis of Muslims, his idea of Western Judeo-Christian world as representing a ‘Universal Civilization’, and especially his contribution to the formulation of the ‘clash of civilizations’ paradigm. I have used scholars like Tariq Ali, Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, William Dalrymple, Hamid Dabashi, Ranjit Hoskote, etc. to bolster my claim that Naipaul’s understanding of Islam’s relationship with the West is based on the nineteenth century colonial historiography of Islam. My thesis provides a critique of V. S. Naipaul’s formulations by arguing that the modern cultural theory teaches us that cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous. Cultures and civilizations are not fixed, unitary and monochromatic. They are so interrelated and interdependent as to beggar any unitary or simple delineated description of their individuality. By following Said’s work on the modern Western scholarship about Orient and Islam, I argue that Naipaulian attempts to “force cultures and peoples into separate and distinct breeds or essences exposes not only the misrepresentations and falsifications that ensue, but also the way in which understanding is complicit with the power to produce such things as the “Orient” or the “West”” (Said, *Orientalism* 349).

In exploring Naipaul's intellectual authority, I have chosen to focus on his Islamic travelogues and some other related material. Because, as I have argued, it is there that we encounter his most Orientalist and politically charged accounts of his understanding of the Islamic world. Furthermore, because of their frequently inflamed polemics, Naipaul's nonfiction, particularly related to Islam, has met with a more acutely divided reception along First World-Third World divide. The vigor of the debates sparked by Naipaul's work and his ‘insight’ into the Islamic world for his readership in the Euro-American world, have ensured that he is no longer simply viewed as a writer, but as embodying a set of politically charged

ideas about Third World-First World relations. For this reason, and because Naipaul's obsessive concerns repeat themselves across the decades and across the globe, I have not followed a conventional development-of-the-author approach. Instead, I have designed my thesis around a series of Naipaul's recurrent fixations and ideas.

A Note on Methodology

In order to show that Naipaul's creation of West vs. Islam binary in his Islamic excursions acts as the contemporary equivalent of nineteenth century colonial discourse embedded in cultural forms of travelogues I follow two methods of analysis: close reading and contrapuntal analysis. Contrapuntal method allows me to juxtapose Naipaul's cultural explorations with other historical and political texts dealing with the same issues so as to point out what was forcibly excluded from the narrative in order to create a homogeneous representation of Islam and Muslims. As Edward Said has pointed out that, "in reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded" (Said *Culture and Imperialism* 79). Similarly, the method of reading the texts closely helps me to understand and unveil the assumptions underlying Naipaul's responses to the presence of Muslims and anything Islamic. For example, consider his visit to Imaduddin's house in Indonesia. While waiting in an empty room at Imaduddin's house he begins to describe the room:

On the pillars of the sitting room there were two or three decorative little flower pieces and, surprisingly, a picture of a sailing ship. About the sitting room were small mementoes of foreign travel, tourist souvenirs, showing a softer side of Imaduddin (or his wife), a side not connected with mental training, if indeed the house was theirs, and if their mementoes had truly tugged at their hearts (and did not, rather, preserve the memory of some pious giver). (Naipaul *Beyond Belief* 18)

By using the word ‘surprisingly’ and the part of sentence ‘a side not connected with mental training’ Naipaul manages to insinuate to his Western readership that such modern and aesthetic aspects of life like ‘decorative little flower pieces’, ‘picture of a sailing ship’, ‘mementos of foreign travel’ do not actually fit together with Islam and the culture it produces. The assumption is that Islamic education is incompatible with a love of travel, sentimentality, or a liking for nautical sense. Such usage of language helps Naipaul to give credence to his ideological formulation that Islam and modernity are diametrically opposed to each other. It allows him to conflate modernity exclusively with the Western world, and simultaneously to negate any other alternative roads to modernity. In addition to this and by equating ‘the West’ with ‘the universal civilization’ Naipaul forecloses any critical reflection on the project of Western modernity itself. In other words, I suggest, that in so doing he soft pedals any suggestion that such universality might often be exploitative in its nature and imperial in its expansiveness.

An Overview of the Chapters

Since my claim is that cultural forms like travelogues cannot be explained without taking into consideration the larger political, historical and imperial context within which travel and travel writing takes place, in my first chapter titled “Culture, Travel, and Imperialism” I give an account of how and when was Asia subordinated by European colonial powers. I point out that the colonized spaces were not only politically and economically subjugated; their cultural, spiritual and intellectual life was also disrupted and looked down upon by the colonial powers. I argue that colonization altered not only their economies but their ways of life, feeling, and their structures of thought were also changed. I maintain that though physical and psychological violence is at the heart of colonialism, the legitimizing discourses are formed in and through cultural expressions. I posit a deep symbiotic relationship between colonial power relations and cultural forms that narrativize the colonial setting and ideology.

Chapter II is called “Naipaul, Clash of Civilizations and Resurgence of Empire”. I argue that Naipaul’s construction of the binary between ‘universal’ West and ‘parasitic’ Islam is a part of late twentieth century Orientalist discourse represented by people like Lewis and Huntington. It is argued that during the last decades of twentieth century American interventions in the Muslim world were part of the neoimperial power relations that were forming during and after the end of the Cold War. In such a situation, I maintain, Naipaul’s representation of Islam as ‘reactionary’ and ‘anti-modern’ and West as an “open” and “universal civilization” has given credence to the ‘clash of civilization thesis’ that has been used by policy think tanks to influence American foreign policy with regard to the Muslim world. This has created an image of Islam based on the idea of threat, which is subsequently used to justify further military interventions in the Muslim world.

In the third chapter “Islam, West, and V. S. Naipaul’s Construction of Islam as a ‘Threat’” I have argued that V. S. Naipaul constructed the binary opposition between essentialized forms of “Islam” and “West” at the time of intense political unrest between some Muslim nations and the US-Israel colonial policies in the Middle East. His representation of Islam as an uncompromising form of “imperialism” and “colonization” is a projection of aims and methods of US colonial and neoimperial power relations that were accruing during the last few decades of twentieth century. I argue that Naipaul, like Lewis and Huntington, has used old Orientalist clichés to portray Islam as a threat to the valance not only of its adherents but also of the Western civilization. I add that as a new Orientalist, Naipaul performed the task of ‘informing’ the West about culture of Islam so that it would be easy for the Western governments to ‘understand’ and, then, to control the Muslim lands.

Chapter IV is titled as “Naipaul and India’s Islamic History: An Assessment”. This chapter looks at Naipaul’s attitude towards Muslim presence in India, and maintains that his treatment of Islam in India was shaped by the

preconceptions and assumptions derived from the history written by historians of the Raj.

Finally, a conclusion will summarize the argument and address the limits of this thesis. It will also emphasize the need of further research into literary forms that would take into consideration the rising Islamophobia in the Euro-American world and the contemporary imperial and coercive power relations between Muslim countries and the US-Israeli imperial formation.

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INTRODUCTION

Vidyadhar Surajprashad Naipaul (1932-2018) was named after an eleventh century Chindela King, Vidyadhar, who is said to have fought against Mahmud of Ghazni. Later on when he became V. S. Naipaul, he liked the name for its associations: "It's such a grand name, a very special name – I cherished it for that reason. I think great things were expected of me" (qtd in French 8). He was born to the descendants of a Brahman indentured family in colonial Trinidad. When slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire, cheap labor was still needed to work in the sugar plantations. The problem of paucity of cheap labor in absence of African slaves was solved by colonial masters by importing indentured laborers from colonial India. Poor and destitute Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, were brought from India as bonded labourers. This was the society in which Naipaul was born, and he would rise from this situation to become one of the best English writers of second half of twentieth century. As a writer his achievements are diverse and multifaceted. Known for his unimpeachable style, strong power of observation, and minute descriptions of people and things, his novels as varied as *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *The Loss of El Dorado*, and *The Enigma of Arrival* would be read and taught in universities throughout the world. Even Derek Walcott, a frequent critic of his ideas about Africans and Trinidadians, considered him as "finest writer of the English sentence" (Walcott 28). Tariq Ali, who called him a "kind of brown sahib" (Ali 134), had to agree that Naipaul was a very brilliant writer. He was a prodigious writer of both fiction and nonfiction. *A House for Mr. Biswas* was said to have the unforced pace of a master-piece. The novelist Angus Wilson wrote that V. S. Naipaul had joined the "small group of unquestionably first-class novelists" (qtd in French 201). This book was praised as a great illustration of the effects of colonialism and one's desire to find an identity. Tariq Ali quoted Edward Said as saying that "he's much better than many of the novelists who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s – he just writes much better" (Ali 134). Rob Nixon says that "nothing since has equaled the

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Naipaul's views about Indians, Muslims, Africans, and other postcolonial peoples would be highly controversial, and that would cause a rift between his admirers in Euro-American world and detractors and critics in the Third World. The Western world has heaped upon him great literary awards and accolades, among them the Booker Prize, the W. H. Smith Prize, the Hawthornden Prize, the Bennett Prize, and the T. S. Eliot Award, this last honoring authors "of abiding importance whose works affirm the moral principles of Western Civilization" (qtd. in Nixon 3). In 1990, the British Crown knighted him, and Naipaul became Lord Naipaul. Some Western commentators hailed him as somebody who interprets the conditions of the Third World countries and diagnoses their problems better than anybody else. On Islam, he was even considered an 'expert' who had informed the Western readers and governments about the "rage" which was setting Muslim countries on 'boil'. On the other hand, and as mentioned above, he has been criticized by those whose cultures were at the receiving end of his diatribes and acidic provocations. It has been argued that Naipaul is a smart restorer of the myths of the 'superior', white, Western race. His travels have been seen as confirming his Eurocentric biases and ideas. Some others "perceive his knighthood as perfectly intelligible, given that he is England's favorite 19th century Englishman" (Nixon 4). Hamid Dabashi in *Brown Skin, White Masks* coupled him with "native informers" like Dinesh D'Souza, Fouad Ajami, Azhar Nafisi, and characterized him as a comprador intellectual who provide the "newly-globalized service to power" and to "the American Empire" (Dabashi 45). Terry Eagleton complained "great art, dreadful politics" while Kwesi Johnson said 'he is a living example of how art transcends the artist because he talks a load of shit but still writes excellent (qtd. in French xii).

Although Naipaul has written great works of literary fiction in which he is said to have become an interpreter of the postcolonial world, his travel writing has

garnered a reputation as a mandarin possessing a penetrating, analytical understanding of the ills of the Third World societies. Anglo-American mainstream scholarship popularized him as an “expert” on Islam. People began to consider him a political authority on Islam and “the revival of Islam”. Clearly, Naipaul’s prestige as a great novelist assisted him in sustaining his new image as an interpreter of postcolonial societies in general and Islamic world in particular. This diversion into the field of open political opinions about Muslim countries, where Euro-American alliance had deep colonial and neoimperial concerns, gave him a new reputation as a mandarin and an institution. His travel books and journalism began to overcome the attention that his fiction had received earlier. People in the West began to read him in order to understand what goes on in the Muslim world. His information and description of “rage of Islam”, that was said to be spreading throughout the Muslim world at the time of American Empires standoff, began to be considered as more important and accurate than Middle Eastern studies experts’. It is in recognition of his ‘insights’ into the world of Islam that the Manhattan Institute invited him to give a lecture on the “fanaticisms out there”. The lecture was titled “Our Universal Civilization” in which he assured his hosts that “Islam”, an uncompromising form of ‘imperialism’, leads to the destruction of those societies, and the Western civilization will emerge victorious and vanquish the rest of the world. It is in this context that Rob Nixon writes about Naipaul that “

I assume throughout what follows that an understanding of his almost programmatically negative representation of formerly colonized societies is inseparable from the question – at once institutional and textual – of how he has secured a reputation in Britain and the United States as the foremost literary commentator on the so-called Third World. (Nixon 6)

I argue that his standard evocations of the former colonies as “barbarous”, “irrational”, “neurotic”, “fantasy”, “without history”, “parasitic”, and “mimic”,

and or the West as “our universal civilization” that gives a sense of “vocation”, “responsibility”, “individualism”, “intellectual”, “creative”, “rational”, “dynamic”, “open” and “tolerant” are assimilable to late twentieth century imperialist discourse, a tradition that runs deep in Britain and the United States. On the one hand he has reproduced the most standard colonial and racial positions and on the other he has been able to present himself as someone who swims against the current ideological positions to tell the “truth” about the former colonies. In other words, and because of his prestige as an “expert” and interpreter of former colonies, his writings are suffused with opinions about the barbarism and dishonesty of Islam, cannibalism in Africa, and simpleminded irrationality of Indians. Although Naipaul has acquired a reputation as an unconventional writer in the Euro-American world, I maintain that his writings about Islam are full of old-fashioned Orientalist ideas, stereotypes, tropes, and images that, like the work of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, function as late twentieth century imperial discourses.

The basic idea that I explore in this thesis by analyzing V. S. Naipaul’s representations of Islam and Muslims in his travelogues is that far from living in an after- or post-imperial world, the political and economic relations between different nations are still determined by hegemonic imperial power structures. These relations are underlined by the continuing presence of colonial discourses about different cultures and peoples. Though the mid-twentieth century nationalisms of Asia and Africa succeeded to end the direct Western domination of the major portions of the non-Western world, settler colonialism intensified in other parts exactly at the time when we were supposed to have entered into the era of the ‘postcolonial’. Along with settler colonialism, neo-imperialism, particularly in the form of neoliberal economic policies of international financial institutions headed by United States of America, has engulfed the poorer countries once again. After the Second World War and in the ‘postcolonial’ period United States of America donned the imperial robes of a super power as an heir to the nineteenth and early twentieth century European empires. The countries of the Third World

though are politically independent, but in many ways are as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by European powers. In this context I make an attempt to critically analyze the continuing usage of the idea of 'postcolonial' as a conceptual category to characterize the contemporary world and the relations between different nations. I argue that there is a need to theoretically relook at the relevance of the term 'postcolonial' considering the increasingly hostile attitude of the only super power, USA, towards the world in general and the Islamic world, in particular.

This project maintains that though for the most part the previously colonized countries have won their political independence, many of the imperial attitudes and structures of feeling underlying colonial relations continue. These structures of feeling support, elaborate, and consolidate the practice and position of empire. I emphasize that the imperial formations have continued to linger not only in political and economic practices but also in general cultural practices of metropolis. I take up Saidian ideas to argue that imperialism and its colonial forms are perpetuated by cultural forms ranging from poetry to novels, dramas, history, anthropology, geography, mainstream media and travel narratives etc. I apply to V. S. Naipaul Edward Said's writings on culture and imperialism to show that modern imperialism does not depend for its survival only on tangible material things like war and aggression. Rather it is enabled and then perpetuated by an idea, a discourse, a universalizing worldview and impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination that certain people are inferior and are in need of civilization from the West. In this context my thesis purports to show that when it comes to writing about Islam and Muslims one finds that in writers like V. S. Naipaul there is no intellectual break with the eighteenth and nineteenth century British ideological framework mostly represented by Orientalism. In other words I posit the view that writings about Islam, like that of Naipaul, act as the contemporary equivalents of nineteenth century colonial discourses. In addition to this I maintain that the production of cultural forms in metropolitan centers cannot be

understood without also apprehending the imperial setting itself within which culture takes form.

The thesis revolves around the idea that the “principle dogmas of Orientalism exist in their purest form today in studies of the Arabs and Islam” (Said, *Orientalism* 300), and these permeate the diverse artistic and scholarly endeavors ranging from Hollywood, mainstream news channels and documentaries to novels, travelogues and academic studies of Islam. These dogmas that structure Western representations of Islam and Muslims are recounted by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* as:

One is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, underdeveloped, inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a “classical” Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically “objective”. A fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible). (Said, *Orientalism* 300-1)

This is the basic theoretical framework that I employ in my analysis of V. S. Naipaul’s representations of Islam and Muslims in his travelogues. Following the footsteps of Said, I trace the involvement of a particular kind of cultural form called travel writing/ travelogues in the enterprise of colonialism. Colonial discourse theory makes us aware about the complicity of cultural and academic

forms in modern forms of colonialism, capitalism, and hegemonic power. Like many other artistic and cultural expressions, the genre of travel writing too has been read from the perspective of subaltern peoples, highlighting its complicity with the colonial discourse. It has been argued by theorists like Mary Louis Pratt, Peter Hulme, and Benita Parry that “travelers, explorers and adventurers were scouts for imperialism, mapping the terrain, signposting potential sources of wealth, marking physical hazards and warning of unfriendly natives” (Parry 149). In his article “Imperial Design and Travel Writing”, Jack Warwick points out that the individual travelers coming from the imperial centers were encouraged to publish accounts of their journeys into countries which were deemed available for colonization. These writers make it abundantly clear that we can no longer ignore empires and the imperial context in our studies of the metropolitan cultural forms. In order to better appreciate V. S. Naipaul’s travelogues about Islam and Muslims I have used the above discussed conceptual framework to trace their affiliation with the imperial ideology of late twentieth century Euro-American Empire.

One of the arguments of my thesis is that though Naipaul’s earlier novels gave expression to postcolonial identities and aspirations, especially of the diasporic communities, there occurred a marked shift in his ideological orientation. According to Patrick French, V. S. Naipaul stopped writing about postcolonial societies from the perspective of the subaltern nations. This ideological shift occurred during the 1970s and 1980s when, according to Edward Said, erstwhile radical writers and philosophers like Foucault began a conservative turn (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 29-30). It is the same period when neoliberal economic system and political liberalism of Western democracies intensified its war against Soviet Union, enlisting the support of authoritarian and unpopular Arab monarchies in the process. Western cultural and political onslaught, under the leadership of United States of America and through international institutions like International Monetary Fund, World Bank and NATO, began to reassert its global power. From Latin America to Korean Peninsula, and in Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Libya, American military

industrial complex began to attack the nation states which had gained independence from European colonialism after the devastation of the Second World War. During the period of Afghan Jihad against Soviet Union, Iranian Revolution and first Gulf War, the area studies experts and mainstream media think tanks in the Euro-American academic world began to publish their analysis of Islam's relationship with the Western world. Western scholars like Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, Sania Hamady, Raphael Patai, Harold Glidden and other American Arabists began to marshal their academic standing in the power canters to explain the so-called "Arab mind" to the world. The idea was that if you peel off the external and secondary influences of history and personal experience, an unchanging and transhistorical category called "Muslim" and "Arab" will show itself in its true colour. In other words, Arabs and Muslims are treated as fixed, stable, in need of investigation, and even in need of knowledge about themselves. As Edward Said reminds us in his seminal investigations of the Western representations of the Orient in *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam*, these Western think tanks and mandarins resort to age old and hackneyed Orientalist clichés to account for the causes of the immanent political conflicts between Muslim nation states and Euro-American powers. I argue in my thesis that it is in this context that V S Naipaul has written his two travelogues titled *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief* about four Muslim majority nations during the later three decades of the twentieth century. I argue that instead of presenting a dispassionate picture of the social, economic and political changes occurring in these Muslim countries, Naipaul uses the Orientalist tropes and images to formulate his theory of what he calls "parasitism" of "Islam" and of "Muslims". He also develops the idea of a "Universal Western Civilization" as opposed to the non-West, particularly Islam. Like the nineteenth century Orientalist writing about Islam, he also uses water-tight binaries like 'us' vs. 'them', 'West' vs. 'Islam' in order to formulate his own version of clash of civilizations thesis. I maintain that Naipaul has many ideological similarities with Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, two other proponents of clash theory.

My contention in the thesis, as said earlier, is that like Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, Naipaul too operates within the overarching ideological apparatus of Orientalism that circumscribes the boundaries of what can be said or written about Islam and Muslim cultures. I have particularly focused on his construction of “Islamic fundamentalism”, his thesis of conversion leading to neurosis of Muslims, his idea of Western Judeo-Christian world as representing a ‘Universal Civilization’, and especially his contribution to the formulation of the ‘clash of civilizations’ paradigm. I have used scholars like Tariq Ali, Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, William Dalrymple, Hamid Dabashi, Ranjit Hoskote, etc. to bolster my claim that Naipaul’s understanding of Islam’s relationship with the West is based on the nineteenth century colonial historiography of Islam. My thesis provides a critique of V. S. Naipaul’s formulations by arguing that the modern cultural theory teaches us that cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous. Cultures and civilizations are not fixed, unitary and monochromatic. They are so interrelated and interdependent as to beggar any unitary or simple delineated description of their individuality. By following Said’s work on the modern Western scholarship about Orient and Islam, I argue that Naipaulian attempts to “force cultures and peoples into separate and distinct breeds or essences exposes not only the misrepresentations and falsifications that ensue, but also the way in which understanding is complicit with the power to produce such things as the “Orient” or the “West”” (Said, *Orientalism* 349).

In exploring Naipaul's intellectual authority, I have chosen to focus on his Islamic travelogues and some other related material. Because, as I have argued, it is there that we encounter his most Orientalist and politically charged accounts of his understanding of the Islamic world. Furthermore, because of their frequently inflamed polemics, Naipaul's nonfiction, particularly related to Islam, has met with a more acutely divided reception along First World-Third World divide. The vigor of the debates sparked by Naipaul's work and his ‘insight’ into the Islamic world for his readership in the Euro-American world, have ensured that he is no longer simply viewed as a writer, but as embodying a set of politically charged

ideas about Third World-First World relations. For this reason, and because Naipaul's obsessive concerns repeat themselves across the decades and across the globe, I have not followed a conventional development-of-the-author approach. Instead, I have designed my thesis around a series of Naipaul's recurrent fixations and ideas.

A Note on Methodology

In order to show that Naipaul's creation of West vs. Islam binary in his Islamic excursions acts as the contemporary equivalent of nineteenth century colonial discourse embedded in cultural forms of travelogues I follow two methods of analysis: close reading and contrapuntal analysis. Contrapuntal method allows me to juxtapose Naipaul's cultural explorations with other historical and political texts dealing with the same issues so as to point out what was forcibly excluded from the narrative in order to create a homogeneous representation of Islam and Muslims. As Edward Said has pointed out that, "in reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded" (Said *Culture and Imperialism* 79). Similarly, the method of reading the texts closely helps me to understand and unveil the assumptions underlying Naipaul's responses to the presence of Muslims and anything Islamic. For example, consider his visit to Imaduddin's house in Indonesia. While waiting in an empty room at Imaduddin's house he begins to describe the room:

On the pillars of the sitting room there were two or three decorative little flower pieces and, surprisingly, a picture of a sailing ship. About the sitting room were small mementoes of foreign travel, tourist souvenirs, showing a softer side of Imaduddin (or his wife), a side not connected with mental training, if indeed the house was theirs, and if their mementoes had truly tugged at their hearts (and did not, rather, preserve the memory of some pious giver). (Naipaul *Beyond Belief* 18)

By using the word ‘surprisingly’ and the part of sentence ‘a side not connected with mental training’ Naipaul manages to insinuate to his Western readership that such modern and aesthetic aspects of life like ‘decorative little flower pieces’, ‘picture of a sailing ship’, ‘mementos of foreign travel’ do not actually fit together with Islam and the culture it produces. The assumption is that Islamic education is incompatible with a love of travel, sentimentality, or a liking for nautical sense. Such usage of language helps Naipaul to give credence to his ideological formulation that Islam and modernity are diametrically opposed to each other. It allows him to conflate modernity exclusively with the Western world, and simultaneously to negate any other alternative roads to modernity. In addition to this and by equating ‘the West’ with ‘the universal civilization’ Naipaul forecloses any critical reflection on the project of Western modernity itself. In other words, I suggest, that in so doing he soft pedals any suggestion that such universality might often be exploitative in its nature and imperial in its expansiveness.

An Overview of the Chapters

Since my claim is that cultural forms like travelogues cannot be explained without taking into consideration the larger political, historical and imperial context within which travel and travel writing takes place, in my first chapter titled “Culture, Travel, and Imperialism” I give an account of how and when was Asia subordinated by European colonial powers. I point out that the colonized spaces were not only politically and economically subjugated; their cultural, spiritual and intellectual life was also disrupted and looked down upon by the colonial powers. I argue that colonization altered not only their economies but their ways of life, feeling, and their structures of thought were also changed. I maintain that though physical and psychological violence is at the heart of colonialism, the legitimizing discourses are formed in and through cultural expressions. I posit a deep symbiotic relationship between colonial power relations and cultural forms that narrativize the colonial setting and ideology.

Chapter II is called “Naipaul, Clash of Civilizations and Resurgence of Empire”. I argue that Naipaul’s construction of the binary between ‘universal’ West and ‘parasitic’ Islam is a part of late twentieth century Orientalist discourse represented by people like Lewis and Huntington. It is argued that during the last decades of twentieth century American interventions in the Muslim world were part of the neoimperial power relations that were forming during and after the end of the Cold War. In such a situation, I maintain, Naipaul’s representation of Islam as ‘reactionary’ and ‘anti-modern’ and West as an “open” and “universal civilization” has given credence to the ‘clash of civilization thesis’ that has been used by policy think tanks to influence American foreign policy with regard to the Muslim world. This has created an image of Islam based on the idea of threat, which is subsequently used to justify further military interventions in the Muslim world.

In the third chapter “Islam, West, and V. S. Naipaul’s Construction of Islam as a ‘Threat’” I have argued that V. S. Naipaul constructed the binary opposition between essentialized forms of “Islam” and “West” at the time of intense political unrest between some Muslim nations and the US-Israel colonial policies in the Middle East. His representation of Islam as an uncompromising form of “imperialism” and “colonization” is a projection of aims and methods of US colonial and neoimperial power relations that were accruing during the last few decades of twentieth century. I argue that Naipaul, like Lewis and Huntington, has used old Orientalist clichés to portray Islam as a threat to the valance not only of its adherents but also of the Western civilization. I add that as a new Orientalist, Naipaul performed the task of ‘informing’ the West about culture of Islam so that it would be easy for the Western governments to ‘understand’ and, then, to control the Muslim lands.

Chapter IV is titled as “Naipaul and India’s Islamic History: An Assessment”. This chapter looks at Naipaul’s attitude towards Muslim presence in India, and maintains that his treatment of Islam in India was shaped by the

preconceptions and assumptions derived from the history written by historians of the Raj.

Finally, a conclusion will summarize the argument and address the limits of this thesis. It will also emphasize the need of further research into literary forms that would take into consideration the rising Islamophobia in the Euro-American world and the contemporary imperial and coercive power relations between Muslim countries and the US-Israeli imperial formation.

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Chapter I

Culture, Travel and Imperialism

Asia Subordinated

The Victorian period, long seen in the West as a time of universal progress, was experienced by Asia, South Asia, Africa and by Latin American countries as a devastating catastrophe. These geopolitical and cultural spaces were not only politically and economically subjugated; their cultural, intellectual, and spiritual life was also disrupted and maligned by the different European colonial powers. Foreign soldiers and business monopolists tore apart the great countries and cultures that had once formed the heart of civilization. As the British colonists gunned down the last heirs to the Mughal Empire in 1857, destroyed the Summer Palace in Beijing, or humiliated the bankrupt rulers of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, it became clear that the world would never be the same again for these cultures and societies. Predatory colonialism and imperialism fueled by profit-hungry capitalism exploited the natural resources of these colonized countries. It monopolized their economies and brought them forcefully into the fluid and uncertain world of capitalism dominated by the protectionist economic and political policies of European imperial powers. Their ways of life, thinking, feeling and their structures of thought were variously changed, disrupted, revolutionized, decimated, creolized, and finally dominated.

In May 1798, Napoleon, along with 40,000 - strong French arm, invaded the great North African country, Egypt. In her scramble for Africa and to outwit Britain, as Pankaj Mishra has argued in his intellectual history of decolonization, *From the Ruins of Empire*,

France needed colonies in order to prosper, as its foreign minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand believed, and a presence in Egypt would not only compensate the French for their loss of territory in

North America, it would also pose a serious challenge to the British East India Company, which produced highly profitable cash crops in its Indian Possessions. (15)

Napoleon had hoped that the French control of Egypt could tip the balance of power in African territories in favor of France and against the British in India, while also stopping the Russians, who eyed the Ottoman Empire. Apart from France's geopolitical concerns, he cherished his own personal desire of conquering the Orient. "Great reputations", he was convinced, "are only made in the Orient; Europe is too small" (Mishra 15). Napoleon decorated his expedition with a huge number of scholars and persons belonging to different disciplines and practices of knowledge. A large contingent of scientists, philosophers, philologists, artists, musicians, astronomers, architects, surveyors, zoologists, printers and engineers accompanied him to Egypt, thereby linking politics, power and knowledge in order to make his imperial designs palatable to his own people and to the people of Egypt. They created a body of knowledge about Egypt, an Oriental space, by "making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, Orientalism 3). This body of knowledge not only justified Napoleon's Oriental expedition, but it also created an ideological framework of reference for future imperial journeys in and around Africa and other Asian countries. All this was meant to record the dawn of European Enlightenment and universal civilization in the ontological and epistemological backward East. Napoleon knew that his Egyptian enterprise and conquest would have immeasurable effects on civilization and commerce of the world. He even tried to make Egyptians and Muslims believe that he possessed the highest admiration for the Prophet of Islam and Islam. Like a typical colonizer he also created an ideological gloss over his manifestly colonial enterprise.

According to Mishra:

Indeed the French, he claimed, were also Muslims, by virtue of their rejection of the Christian Trinity. He also made some noises – familiar to us after two centuries of imperial wars disguised as humanitarian interventions – about delivering the Egyptians from their despotic masters. (16)

In July 1798, the French army overcame all the military opposition and routed any resistance on the part of the ruling Mamluks and their overlords in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. They could not withstand the war-hardened French soldiers who outnumbered them and were also backed by the latest military technology and arms. Though for his own imperial ideological reasons he was always keen to express his admiration for Islam, still the Egyptian cleric and scholar Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarati described Napoleon's colonial adventure as

. . . great battles, terrible events, disastrous facts, calamities, unhappiness, sufferings, persecution, upsets in the order of things, terror, revolutions, disorders, devastations – in a word, the beginning of a series of great misfortunes. (Mostyn 18)

This momentous historical event set the tone and tenor for several such other encounters between 'East' and 'West', 'Islam' and 'Western Civilization'. Al-Jabarati's reaction to the fall of Egypt under the weight of European imperial powers will be repeated again and again by colonized people from Morocco to Java, Algeria, Libya, Middle East, India, China and Japan. On the other side of the colonial divide and throughout the nineteenth century, European writers, philosophers, travelers, scientists, statesmen and administrators would express an idea of 'Europe' as a place of universal progress, science, civilization, culture human rights, liberty, equality, freedom and democracy. This idea emerged from the American and French revolutions and seemed to place the West in the bandwagon of the progress.

Europe's encounter with India in the modern period began with the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Calicut in 1498. Over subsequent centuries European powers, and especially Britain with the help of superior naval power and profit-hungry East India Company, tightened their colonial grip over Indian territories by defeating one princely state after another. The original desire for the monopoly of the spice trade changed in a hundred years to the import into Europe of textiles, tea, and other goods, which again, according to K. M. Panikar, "changed after the Industrial Revolution in Britain into an urge to find markets for European manufactured goods and finally for the investment of capital" (Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance* 13). He further maintains that

Originally confined to trade, European interests became in the nineteenth century predominantly political over many years. The leadership of European peoples in this period also underwent change. From Portugal the supremacy in trade was wrested by the Dutch. In the middle of the eighteenth century Britain and France contested for it for a short time. Since then, the authority of Britain was never seriously challenged till the beginning of the Second World War. (13)

The British rule on the land mass of India was steadily and firmly established by disintegrating the ailing Mughal Empire which formally ended in 1857 when 'the last Mughal' Bahadur Shah Zafar II was exiled to Rangoon. On 14 September 1857, the British assaulted and took the capital city of Mughal Empire and, according to William Dalrymple, "sacking and looting the Mughal Capital, and massacring great swathes of the population" (Dalrymple 4). Dalrymple quotes Edward Vibart, a nineteen-year old British Officer, as having recorded that

The orders went out to shoot every soul. It was literally murder . . . I have seen many bloody and awful sights lately but such a one as I witnessed yesterday I pray I never see again. The women were all

spared but their screams, on seeing their husbands and sons
butchered, were most painful . . . hard must be that man's heart I
think who can look on with indifference . . . (Dalrymple 4)

In his life time Zafar had seen his own dynasty reduced to humiliating insignificance, while the British transformed themselves from vulnerable traders into an aggressively expansionist military power. From one corner of India to another, the British had, in the course of a hundred years of warfare, established their formidable power. Those kingdoms like Kashmir, Hyderabad, Travancore, and the Rajput States which were permitted to exist, had been turned into dependent territories, isolated and politically and economically powerless against the authority of the British. Panikkar says that "the Company felt itself to be the undisputed master of India, and under Lord Dalhousie set itself to the task of building up a modern unified administration" (Panikkar 82). The British subsequently controlled and ruthlessly exploited economically all the major strategically important areas of India. The British colonization of India inaugurated a potent presence in mainland Asia "that was to help them force open China to European traders, and turn the rest of Asia into a European dependency" (Mishra 23).

The predicament caused by the Western-style capitalism and imperialism in countries as different as Egypt, Turkey, China and India, and the subsequent economic exploitation, did not even leave the culture of these places insulated from the larger social and economic changes unleashed by the British. In general, growing technological power and commercial success were making the British change their opinions of India. Far from being considered as the abode of civilization, India was viewed as a backward place. Its cultures, languages, philosophies and religions began to be treated as products of an under-developed and superstitious mind. This imperial hubris was given best vent by Lord Thomas Macaulay in his now infamous 'Minutes on Indian Education' (1835) in which he declared, from the vantage point of a colonial edifice, that all the literature and

culture of Arabia and India is not equal to the one shelf of European books. It is in this vein that he expresses his colonial plan to restructure the mental makeup of 'barbaric Indians':

We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, words and intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of this country . . . (Ashcroft et. al. 431)

That would be the White Man's burden in India in particular and the world in general. This infantilizing and rude attitude towards India and its people informed the policies of the British colonial administrators. The British indifference to Indian society and culture was best expressed by Edmund Burke and Indian historian Ghulam Hussain Khan Tabatabai. Burke, then a member of British Parliament, had observed that

Young men (boys almost) govern there without a society and without sympathy with the natives . . . they roll one after another, wave after wave; and there is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage. (Edmund Burke 453)

Similarly, Tabatabai maintained that "no love, and no coalition can take root between the conquerors and the conquered" (qtd in Mishra 24). Haji Mustapha, a convert to Islam who translated Tabatabai's book into English, concurred with Tabatabai. According to him, "the general turn of the English individuals in India seems to be a thorough contempt for the Indians (as a national body). It is taken to be no better than a dead stock that may be worked upon without much consideration and at pleasure" (ibid). The British rule inflicted multifarious damage on India. Its economy and political authority was destroyed. Mohandas Gandhi reflected on this damage in his 'Declaration of Indian

Independence' in 1930 and stated that "Village industries, such as hand spinning, have been destroyed . . . Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to bring further burdens on the peasantry. All administrative talent is killed and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and clerkships . . . the system of education has torn us from our moorings (qtd in Mishra 36).

Muslims of India suffered the most under the new imperial dispensation. They not only lost the seat of power, but their culture also suffered tremendously when the British colonial administrators replaced Persian by English as the official language. This undermined the traditional cultural world of Indian Muslims. In the new colonial setting the Muslim's former subjects – Hindus – were favored by the new rulers as part of the divide and rule policy. As the years passed and "as Muslim prestige and learning sank, and Hindu confidence, wealth, education and power increased, Hindus and Muslims would grow gradually apart, as British policies of divide and rule found willing collaborators among the chauvinists of both faiths" (Dalrymple 484). After 1857 Muslims began to be portrayed negatively in British press and that colonial discourse continues to influence the contemporary Indian response to Indian Islamic history. Dalrymple maintains that for many Indians today

The Mughals are still perceived as it suited the British to portray them in the imperial propaganda that they taught in Indian schools after 1857: as sensual, decadent, temple-destroying invaders – something that was forcefully and depressingly demonstrated by the whole episode of the demolition of the Baburi Masjid at Ayodhya in 1992. (Dalrymple 479)

New Lords of the World

The nineteenth century saw the slow but sure fall of Asia's three great empires under the weight of technologically and militarily strong European powers. The Chinese Qing dynasty, India's Mughal Empire and Turkish Ottoman

Empire could not withstand the aggressive British capitalist policies backed by strong naval gunships. Almost all of Asia and Africa began to be ruled from European capitals. Their destinies were shaped in policy institutions of London and Paris. European capital cities not only became the political and economic powerhouses of the world, but also determined the tastes and values in culture and civilization as well. History itself began to be seen as European. The ideas of European enlightenment were given a center stage. Christian Europe began to be seen as the site of historical progress and rest of the world was merely treated as field for civilizational experiments. Europe finally donned the robes of civilizational mission to 'educate' the 'backward' and 'barbaric' cultures and peoples.

Although there have been many other imperialisms in the past, yet there was something different in the modern European Imperialism that distinguished it from previous imperial formations. As Pankaj Mishra observes in his book that "many victims of European conquests themselves belonged to powerful empires – Ottoman Turkey, Qing China. But:

Modern European Imperialism would be wholly unprecedented in creating a global hierarchy of economic, physical and cultural power through either outright conquest or 'informal' empires of free trade and unequal treaties. (Mishra 42)

This European colonial onslaught on Asia and Africa, where it mostly replaced Muslim rulers, left a trail of manifold social, economic and cultural disruptions in its wake. White Europeans, mostly men, became the new lords of the world and civilization came to be mainly represented by European cultural forms and traditions. Ideas of science and historical knowledge, of morality, culture, order, and even styles of dress came to be seen and defined in purely European terms. History itself became a story of the progress of Europe from one higher stage of civilization to another.

Culture, Imperialism and Structures of Feeling

Colonialism and imperialism are fundamentally very complex and varied phenomenon. However, the main battle in imperial formations has always been for the control of land and other natural resources. Empires are built to restructure societies, economies and politics of colonized populations for the benefit of metropolitan centers. Coercive state apparatuses like naval, air, and military powers are of fundamental importance for the establishment and perpetuation of unequal power relations between colonizers and colonized. Ethnic cleansing of Native Americans, Aborigines of Australia and New Zealand, and the systematic violence used by European colonizers during nineteenth and early twentieth centuries throughout the world is enough to show that empires are built on blood and violence.

Frantz Fanon in his studies of colonialism and decolonization has made this amply clear that physical and psychological violence is at the heart of colonial processes. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, an important theoretical intervention which deals, among other things, with colonial and anticolonial violence, he maintains that the colonial world is a vertically divided space which is characterized by the “existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans” (Fanon 29). The dividing line is shown by barracks and police stations. He further argues that

In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression . . . In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counselors and ‘bewilderers’ separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle-butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of

pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native. (29)

Fanon's original insights into the violent relationship between colonizers ('us') and colonized ('them') are corroborated by Benita Parry whose Marxist position within postcolonial studies has focused on the "material impulses to colonialism, its appropriation of physical resources, exploitation of human labour and institutional repression" (Parry 3). Contrary to the analysis of colonialism based on the ascendancy of linguistic turn within literary theory, Parry bats for a theory of imperialism that is more concerned with "the lived condition of unequal power sharing globally" (ibid). Focusing on the all too tangible violence of imperialism, Parry writes that unequal power relations and systematic violence characterized the colonial space everywhere. The circumstances of colonized populations are constituted by the larger field of power relations that are designed to dominate, exploit and rule the colonized other who is always treated as ontologically inferior being.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon analyses the psychological effects of colonialism by using Freudian and Marxist theories of alienation. Unequal social and economic realities, on the one hand, and, on the other, the positing of imperial culture and language as the civilized norm creates an inferiority complex in the subjectivity of the colonized other. According to Fanon, "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:

- Primarily, economic; - subsequently, the internalization – or, better, the epidermalization – of this inferiority (Fanon 4).

Central to Fanon's view of the colonized mind under colonialism is the significance of language, that is culture, in the alienation of the colonized black

person, an ugly colonial process Fanon aimed at reversing via a process he called disalienation. Fanon ascribes a basic importance to the phenomenon of language of the colonizers, a cultural element which “should provide us with one of the elements in the colored man’s comprehension of the dimension of the other. For it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other” (8). Fanon argues that

All colonized people – in other words, people in whom an inferiority complex has taken root, whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave – position themselves in relation to the civilizing language, i.e. the metropolitan culture. (2)

By ‘metropolitan culture’ Fanon mostly meant language and literature of the colonial powers. It is apparent that Fanon posits culture of the colonizers at the heart of the colonial formations and imperial processes. He suggests that culture carries the values, morality, opinions, thought processes and frame of references of the dominant power structure. In other words, culture in colonial situations becomes a site of the white man’s civilizing mission.

This aspect of the analysis of colonialism and imperialism focuses on culture as an ideological state apparatus. It posits a deep symbiotic relationship between colonial power relations and cultural forms that narrativize the colonial setting and ideology. One of the most important theoretical interventions in this vein has been that of Edward Said. Said’s writings like *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* opened new vistas of understanding imperialism and its formations. He illuminated the imperial doctrine found in much Western culture and canonical texts. *Culture and Imperialism* demonstrates how, according to John Pilger, “the perceptions of colonisers and colonized are entwined by the assumptions that drove imperialism 100 years ago and drives it today” (Pilger 88). In this book Said provides a very useful guide to imperialism in its most insidious form: culture. He uses the idea of worldliness of cultural forms to show that the Western culture is deeply implicated in the sordid history of imperialism. He argues that the contours of Western culture are shaped by the single fact of

imperialism. According to him, therefore, “the job of literary analysis is, first of all, to find the signs of that (imperial) geography, the references to it in the literary work”. He adds that the

. . . geography, landscape, and setting are paramount. You can't have a novel without a setting, and setting is there; it's immediately evident. The analysis of literary work, then, in the second sense, is to elucidate the setting, which puts the work in touch with this larger historical experience of domination and being dominated, which I was talking about. (Said *Power, Politics and Culture* 193)

Empire and its ideological structures of domination, in other words, are written into the very fabric of imperial culture, whose main function seems to be the manufacturing of consent. Cultural forms help to create ideas conducive to the colonial center. Culture and literature creates images, codes, stereotypes and a language that in one way or the other provides legitimacy and naturalizes the coercive power relations between dominant and dominated. As Ania Loomba says that “literature, in such a reading, both reflects and creates ways of seeing and modes of articulation that are central to the colonial process. It is especially crucial to the formation of colonial discourses because it influences people as individuals” (Loomba 66).

After defining imperialism as “the practice, the theory, and the attitude of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory” Edward Said goes on to say that colonial structures can be maintained not only through open brute force but also through social, economic and, most importantly, through cultural dependence. Even if colonialism ends, yet imperialism lingers where it always has been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 8). These practices are supported and perpetuated by different kinds of colonial discourses which are built on racist and orientalist ideas and concepts that divide the people between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’, ‘civilized’ and

'barbaric'. The overseas domination and the cultural formations associated with create structures of feeling that give a sense of mission to the citizens of metropolitan centre. They construct ideas like 'responsibility to protect', 'responsibility to bring democracy' and 'responsibility to civilize the barbarians', and such colonial discourses redeem the conquest of the earth, which otherwise is a very bloody practice.

Another intervention in cultural politics, which analyzed the discursive power of colonial texts and their representations of colonized cultures and peoples, is Gauri Viswanathan's *The Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. Viswanathan uses Antonio Gramsci's insights regarding the relations of culture and power to argue that the introduction of English studies in India by colonial government of Britain was an ideological apparatus designed to manufacture consent through European canonical texts. The book studies "the institution, practice, and the ideology of English studies introduced in India under British colonial rule" (Viswanathan 1). The purpose behind this cultural policy was to give to colonial subjects a conviction that the colonizers are more intelligent, benevolent, humane, and progressive. It was designed to give the 'natives' a realization that they are 'inferior', 'backward', and in need of a 'superior English race' to save them from 'barbaric' and 'superstitious' cultural forms and practices. Viswanathan demonstrates that

The discipline of English came into its own in an age of colonialism . . . no serious account of its growth and development can afford to ignore the imperial mission of educating and civilizing colonial subjects in the literature and thought of England, a mission that in the long run served to strengthen Western cultural hegemony in enormously complex ways. (2)

The role of English literature as a tool of colonial subjugation can be understood from the fact that English literature appeared as a subject in the curriculum of the colonies long before it was institutionalized in England. As

Terry Eagleton makes it clear the “era of the academic establishment of English is also the era of high imperialism in England . . . What was at stake in English studies was less English *literature* than *English* literature: our great ‘national poets’ Shakespeare and Milton, the sense of an ‘organic’ national tradition and identity to which new recruits could be admitted by the study of humane letters” (Eagleton 24). In other words one can safely state that English literary and other cultural texts like dramas, novels, epics, travelogues, essays and other expressions were used to serve and support social and political control. Culture becomes a discourse, activity, process and an institutional site where ideological battles are fought, won or lost. While reflecting on the ideological function of English literature in India, Viswanathan shows that “certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature – for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking – were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition” (Viswanathan 3). This makes it clear that the English colonizers used literature and culture to impart to the natives the values and aesthetic principles which were deemed ‘civilized’ by the administrators of the colonies. Culture would carry the images of morally superior and just home country, on the one hand, and, on the other, highlight the uncivilized and barbaric nature of the vanquished civilizations. This is made apparent by one of the colonial policy makers who argued that by giving young Indians a taste for the arts and literature of England

We might insensibly wean their affections from the Persian muse, teach them to despise the barbarous splendor of their ancient princes, and, totally supplanting the tastes which flourished under the Mogul reign, make them look to this country with that veneration, which the youthful student feels for the classical soil of Greece. (qtd in Viswanathan 6)

Such policy decisions are underpinned by the common paternalistic and condescending attitude towards subjugated populations and their cultural forms. The colonized people are represented as morally and intellectually deficient as compared to the white rulers. Their attitudes, modes of thought, morality, ethics and forms of knowledge are thought to be the products of a superstitious mind. They are presented in essentialist terms as objects rather than the subjects of their own history. Their agency to make their own destiny is denied to them by the metropolitan administrator. Colonial cultural forms ranging from travelogues to music and painting create stereotypical representations of the colonized people and their civilization. They are shown to have created nothing. Their contributions to the human civilization are not counted. And most importantly, they are treated as less than human. In other words, an extreme process of dehumanization and othering works at the heart of unequal power relations that characterize the phenomenon called cultural imperialism. New social and political relationships are created, maintained or perpetuated. Older traditions and ways of living are altered beyond recognition.

Gauri Viswanathan's study of English studies in India during colonial period makes amply clear "that the Eurocentric literary curriculum of the nineteenth century was less a statement of the superiority of the Western tradition than a vital, active instrument of Western hegemony in concert with commercial expansionism and military actions" (Viswanathan 167). These analyses of colonial policies and discourses strengthen Edward Said's theoretical formulations regarding Orientalist knowledge forms. They show that the British Indian educational institutions and literary syllabus were conceived as part and parcel of the act of securing and consolidating power. Viswanathan concludes this study of relationship between culture and imperialism in the following important terms:

What I am suggesting, however, is that we can no longer afford to regard the uses to which literary works were put in the service of British imperialism as extraneous to the way these texts are to be

read. The involvement of colonialism with literary culture is too deep, too pervasive for the disciplinary development of English literary pedagogy to be studied with Britain as its only or primary focus. Large areas of discussion have yet to be fully mapped out, but I am hopeful that with sustained cross-referencing between Western culture and imperialism will be progressively illuminated. (169)

The Kenyan novelist and essayist, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, also made an important intervention in the debate regarding the roots of imperialism in European culture. In his works like *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* and *Writers in Politics* Ngugi's critical consciousness focused on how the West came to see itself as the centre of the universe. He argued that within colonial and neo-colonial situations cultural power, like political and economic power, is controlled at the imperial centre. In many ways he led the war against cultural imperialism in Africa. However, it was in *Decolonising the Mind* that Ngugi squarely beamed his critical light on the politics of language and culture within imperial formations. His contention is that imperialism in Africa or in the rest of the world has not ended. Rather it continues in many international economic and political policies of the rich Western countries. The "imperialist tradition in Africa is today maintained by the international bourgeoisie using multinational and of course the flag-waving native ruling classes" (Ngugi 2). Like Said and Viswanathan, Ngugi too considers culture as the biggest and potent weapon wielded by the colonial powers. It will not be out of place to quote Ngugi here in some detail to highlight the basic contention of this chapter:

The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them to see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves

from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves . . . It even plants serious doubts about the moral rightness of struggle . . . The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish. Amidst this wasteland which it has created, imperialism presents itself as the cure and demands that the dependent sing hymns of praise with the constant refrain: 'Theft is holy'. (3)

Travelogues and Traveling for Empire

Edward Said's studies of colonial discourse and imperialism have been fundamental in creating critical language and paradigm within which Western culture's investment in colonial enterprise is analyzed. His concept of worldliness of cultural forms has informed postcolonial critical practice of seeing literature and other artistic creations within the larger historical and sociopolitical framework. Said's theoretical intervention in the field of colonial discourse studies is of paramount importance in giving significance to the immediate context within which knowledge production takes place. Following Michael Foucault and Fanon, he maintained that forms of knowledge and institutions of knowledge production cannot be divorced from the relations of power between different socioeconomic classes and colonial groups. As has been already argued in the previous section, Edward Said has made sordid history of European colonialism integral to the study of Western literature and civilization. In other words, Western modernity and enlightenment itself, Said argues, cannot be properly understood without taking into consideration the political and economic structures that informed all aspects of modern life. According to him

Texts are protean things; they are tied to circumstances and to politics large and small, and these require attention and criticism. No one can take stock of everything, of course, just as no one theory can explain or account for the connections among texts and societies. But reading and writing texts are never neutral activities:

there are interests, powers, passions, pleasures entailed no matter how aesthetic and entertaining the work. Media, political economy, mass institutions – in fine, the tracings of secular power and the influence of the state – are part of what we call literature. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 385)

Said's project bridged the gap between theory and either the ongoing or historical imperialism by highlighting the ways European culture constructed the images of the superiority of West over non-West. Colonial experience shaped both the power center and the marginalized peripheries. And it is in this context that Said said that students of

. . . literature today must from the onset take account of the politics of what they study; one cannot postpone discussions of slavery, colonialism, racism in any serious investigations of modern Indian, African, Latin and North American, Arabic, Caribbean, and Commonwealth literature. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 383)

One of many cultural forms that was and, to a large extent, still is, invested in colonial and neo-colonial projects is travelogues. Travel and accounts of the experiences of travel through British Empire proliferated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This coincided with the gradual strengthening and expansion of Western overseas colonial adventures. Travel writings described people, cultures, and traditions of colonized lands. According to Laura Franey, "Travelers' descriptions of their relationships with small groups of Africans express metropolitan thinking about – and political and social treatment of – larger groups of Africans. The majority of the travelers . . . took active roles in the expansion of European power before, during, or soon after their travels" (Franey 3). They mapped the empire for the consumption of readers in metropolitan cities, and many "travelers fused their journey as springboards from which to engage in treaty making . . . and some travelers either worked later as colonial administrators or lobbied in Great Britain for changes in colonial governance" (ibid). Travelers

created genres of adventure stories that have been credited with helping produce a generation of Britons absolutely committed to the idea of overseas empire and willing to use force to gain British goals. Britain's ever closer colonial contact with the wider world meant that larger and larger numbers of travelers made journeys to report upon it. Roy Bridges has argued in his essay "Exploration and travel outside Europe" that the travel writing during nineteenth century became increasingly "identified with the interests and preoccupations of those in European societies who wished to bring the non-European world into a position where it could be influenced, exploited, or in some cases, directly controlled" (Bridges 53). In order to further underline the relationship between travel writing and British colonial expansion Bridges states that

In the case of Britain, the identification was particularly close.

There was some political control but more significant were various kinds of relationships stopping short of direct administration which historians have struggled to characterize by terms such as 'informal empire' or 'unofficial imperialism'. Trade, diplomacy, missionary endeavor, an scientific exploration might all contribute to the British expansion and each produced its own travel writing.

Increasingly European technological expertise provided advantages which made it easier to influence or dominate non-Europeans. (53)

One can even argue that the fictionalized travel narratives of writers like Joseph Conrad may have, to some extent, enabled European rule in Africa to continue by helping transform imperial rhetoric into a rhetoric that "upheld both European trusteeship in other parts of the world and the benefits of free trade over forms of economic monopoly" (Franey 68). Travel writing as an ethnographic and anthropological enterprise inscribed meanings and identities not only on the body politic of colonized spaces, but it was also an exercise in self-definition. European travelers invariably created and perpetuated stereotypical and orientalist images of the colonized world in general and Islamic world and Muslims in particular.

In the wake of publication of Said's books *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* many colonial discourse theorists undertook bath-breaking studies of travel and travel literature. These theorists like Mary Louise Pratt, Peter Hulme, Rana Kabbani, Gauri Viswanathan, Gayatri Spivak, Robert Young, and Billie Melman etc. provided critical discourse analysis of texts written by westerners about colonized countries. For them travel writing was essentially "an instrument within colonial expansion and served to reinforce colonial rule once in place" (Mills 2). They argued that travel writers of colonial period have been retailers of white and, mostly, male myths and prejudices, and their readers in imperial cities have been eager consumers of exotic and culturally othered groups. Their critical approach to travel writing has shown, according to Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, that the "travel writing frequently provides and effective alibi for the perpetuation or reinstallation of ethnocentrically superior attitudes to "other" cultures, peoples, and places" (Holland and Huggan VIII).

A very important text in this genre has been that of Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Pratt's interdisciplinary approach investigates the way in which travel writing has contributed to the construction of an image of the world beyond Europe for European readership. Drawing on various critical insights from discourse analysis, anthropology, literary theory and Postcolonialism, Pratt continues the critique of eurocentrism and sociopolitical power structures associated with it. Her project in this book is to make an effort "to make the workings of imperialism, in its colonial, neocolonial and non-colonial forms, available to reflection and transformation. It is about loosening imperialism's grip on imagination and knowledge, and creating clearings for better ways of living in knowing the world" (Pratt XII). Her book is all the more important because its analysis of travel narratives takes the late twentieth century imperial configurations into consideration. Imperial thinking and enterprises continue to renew themselves with the United States of America replacing the old British and French empires. The contemporary imperialism in the form of neoliberal globalization is spearheaded by America, which has more

than 800 military bases around the world. According to Pratt, “In the 1980s and 1990s a new phase of empire unfurled across the planet. The collapse of Soviet bloc brought a new geopolitical order and the communications revolution transformed every map of the possible” (Pratt 237). In the early twenty first century the imperially designed neoliberalism and globalization has radically restructured planetary relations in favor of Euro-American metropolises. In addition to this, rich countries like America and England have, through World Bank and International Monetary Fund, set in “motion a new wave of plunder, imposing extremely harsh social and economic conditions on the populations of weaker countries in the name of corporate profit” (238).

The continuing settler colonialism in historical Palestine coupled with American imperial military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq has renewed the old Orientalist tropes, stereotypes and images. Mainstream media in Europe and America and policy journals are again awash with the nineteenth century colonial discourse about Muslims and Islam. This phenomenon of resurgence of Orientalist discourse is particularly important because, like V. S. Naipaul’s journeys to Islamic world, Muslim spaces and cultures have always been favored destinations of travel writers from colonial capitals. Islamic Orient has always been treated by West as a civilizational foil. Europe had its most prized colonies in that part of the world. The religious and geographical nearness of the two civilizations has made the relations between the two very complicated, which otherwise cannot be explained in simple ‘us’ vs ‘them’ terms. The whole field of Orientalism has been built on this supposedly ontological distinction between ‘West’ and ‘Islam’. Islam became a perfect image of West’s ‘other’, which characterized much of colonial travel narratives about Islamic culture and society. According to Edward Said colonial traveler as an Orientalist “surveys the Orient from above, with the aim of getting hold of the whole sprawling panorama before him – culture, religion, mind, history, society. To do this he must see every detail through the device of a set of reductive categories (the Semites, the Muslim, the Orient, and so forth) (Said, *Orientalism* 239). Such reductive and essentializing markers of

identification are still largely prevalent in the Western discussions about Islam. Policy pundits and Orientalist scholars of Islam like Bernard Lewis can still talk about 'Muslim mind' and 'roots of Muslim rage' without even winking an eye. It is in this context that Said has argued that

What has not been sufficiently stressed in histories of modern anti-Semitism has been the legitimization of such atavistic designations by Orientalism, and more important for my purposes here, the way this academic and intellectual legitimization has persisted right through the modern age in discussions of Islam, the Arabs, or the Near Orient. For whereas it is no longer possible to write learned (or even popular) disquisitions on either "the Negro mind" or "the Jewish personality", it is perfectly possible to engage in such research as "the Islamic mind" or "the Arab character" . . . (262)

The strategic importance of Islamic Orient has always been a matter of chief concern to Western imperialists. In the second half of twentieth century and in the early twenty first century the American involvement in the Middle East has increased, and this has given a renewed impetus to the use of old fashioned stereotypes about Muslims and their culture and civilization. I argue that in the contemporary era Orientalism has been successfully accommodated to the new forms of global empire called New World Order, headed and steered by the United States of America.

In order to underline the issues involved, and since this thesis purports to critically analyze V. S. Naipaul's travelogues regarding Islam and Muslims, it would be apt to give an example of late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial traveler, Gertrude Bell, to one part of Islamic Orient. Bell traveled through Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) and recorded her experiences in her two major works of travel-literature, *The Desert and the Sown* (1907) and *Amurath to Amurath* (1911). Her account weaves together the historical and archeological significance of the Middle East with its contemporary

strategic importance to British colonial adventures. Bell used her travelogues to present her opinions on how Britain should best govern the Middle Eastern areas under her rule. According to Julia Emberley “Bell’s position was entirely in keeping with prevailing colonial ideas of indirect rule with its governing strategy of granting only partial autonomy to the newly forming Arab nations while maintain British political and economic control by proxy” (Emberley 121). She built her discourse on the common nineteenth century ideology of racial difference in which Muslims of Arab world were shown to be in need of Western civilizing influence. In one of her essays ‘The basis of government in Turkish Arabia’ she argued that the Western world has progressed and produced a scientifically and administratively advanced civilization. But “the tribes of Iraq have advanced but little beyond the Moot court, and should the shaping of their destinies become our care in the future, we shall be wise to eschew any experiments tending to rush them into highly specialized institutions” (Hulme and McDougall 119). The idea of White Man’s burden clearly can be seen operating in such bold pronouncements made from the vantage point of colonial authority. The idea is that the Arab Muslims have not been able to produce cultural and institutional forms needed to live life in a modern fast changing world. Therefore, it is West’s responsibility to bring fruits of modernity and civilization to the backward and barbaric tent dwellers. At the same time one can also notice Bell’s infantilizing discourse coupled with notion of Western civilized man acting as an agent of change. As Uday Mehta has noted, “infantilisation was a foundational aspect of the liberal ideology underlying British imperial practices in colonial governance during the early twentieth century” (Emberley 123).

This chapter has constructed a theoretical framework within which Naipaul’s writings about Islam will be analyzed. It has been argued that the Victorian period, viewed in the West as a time of enlightenment and progress, was experienced by Asians in general and Muslims in particular as a devastating catastrophe. During this period most of the land mass of the world was increasingly colonized and exploited by European, and especially by British,

imperial power. Imperialism's legitimizing colonial discourses were constructed and culture became an important site of image making and self-representation. Colonial scientists, administrators, anthropologists, philologists, writers, travelers, and cartographers, all partook in the formation of colonial discourse that justified the imperial policies as a form of civilizing mission. Culture became deeply entwined with imperialism. It created and perpetuated images, stereotypes, and rhetorical tropes to represent the colonized populations.

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Chapter II

Naipaul, Clash of Civilizations and Resurgence of Empire

Resurgence of Empire

The basic idea that I explore in this chapter by looking at V. S. Naipaul's construction of the binary between 'Islam' and 'West' is that far from living in an after – or post-imperial world, the political and economic relations between different nation states are still determined by the hegemonic power structures whose foundations were laid during nineteenth century scramble for colonies. I argue that those unequal coercive power relations are underlined by the continuing presence of colonial discourses about different cultures in general and about Islamic world in particular. The conceptual framework discussed in the previous chapter provides a valuable tool to trace the affiliation of Naipaul's Islamic travelogues with the imperial ideology of late twentieth century Euro-American Empire. Though the mid-twentieth century national liberation movements of Asia and Africa succeeded to end the direct Western domination of the major portions of the non-Western world, settler colonialism intensified in other parts exactly at the time when we were supposed to have entered the postcolonial era. Along with settler colonialism, neo-imperialism, particularly in the form of neoliberal economic policies of international financial institutions headed by the United States of America, has engulfed the poorer countries once again. After the Second World War America donned the imperial robes of a sole super power as heir to the nineteenth and early twentieth century European empires. The countries of the 'Third' world, though politically independent, are in many ways as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by various European colonial powers. I point out that many of the imperial attitudes and structures of feeling underlying colonial relations not only continue in various cultural forms like media and Hollywood, but have in fact intensified in the wake of America's increasingly militaristic interventions in the Muslim lands after the Second World War. In this

context there is a need to theoretically relook at the relevance of the term 'postcolonial', considering the increasingly hostile attitude of the only super power, USA, towards the world in general and Islamic world in particular.

The Second World War ended, as all wars end, with a disaster. Millions of soldiers were killed on sides of the imperial divide. Holocaust, based on the racist colonial ideology of Aryan supremacy, left a deep wound in European collective body politic and showed the hollowness of modernity's dream of universal progress. The very rise of Hitler to power on the bandwagon of electoral democracy and his expansionist policies based on totalitarianism left the critical voices like Jean Paul Sartre and Bertrand Russell dumbfounded. Theodore Adorno lamented 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric' (Adorno 34) and Walter Benjamin declared that "every document of civilization is at same time a document of barbarism" (Benjamin 256). During the war two rival ideologies of Capitalism, represented by America and Britain, and Communism, represented by USSR, came together to defeat the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Mussolini. Also and because of the same imperial war Britain's greatest and richest colonies in Asia, Middle East, and Africa gained independence as a result of two things: long and popular national liberation movements, and war torn economies of Europe. However, the same historical moment of world anti-colonialism paradoxically also laid the foundations for the new imperial configurations and fault lines to emerge. The establishment of Israel as the national home of world Jewry by the Euro-American colonial powers and Zionist organization renewed the occupation of Arab lands, Palestine, and with it resurfaced the old Western stereotypical perceptions of Islam and its culture. Similarly, new imperial rivalry between two new super powers, USSR and USA, emerged from the debris of Second World War. Both these contenders for world domination, based on two opposite ideologies, began to spread their spheres of influence to all the continents of the world. Cuba, Indochina, Congo and Afghanistan became the new battler fields for imperial domination during the Cold War. Both the two powers competed in a dangerous game of nuclearization of their respective spheres of

influence. This hunger for ever more military power and world domination resulted in a precarious Cuban missile crisis which enhanced the threat of third world war in which nuclear weapons would have been used from all sides.

America's involvement in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Palestine, and after 1975 in Africa and Afghanistan became flashpoints in new struggles for world domination. 1975 was the year of the American defeat in Indochina, and of the collapse of Portuguese rule in the colonies of Mozambique, Angola, and Portuguese Guinea, the last European empire in Africa. "In retrospect, it was the year that the focal point of the Cold War shifted from the Southeast Asia to Southern Africa" and America used all tricks in the imperial trade to out-wit USSR's influence (Mamdani 63). European empires were ending, but at the same time new imperial conflicts and configurations were forming with America as the new colonial centre.

The rapid decline in colonialism stimulated the rise of alternative means of domination by the more powerful states, especially America, after the Second World War. Harry Magdoff like many other theorist of imperial phenomenon has done an excellent study of imperialism in its various forms. According to him:

Control and influence by means other than outright colonial possession is hardly a new phenomenon. Indeed, informal empire has been an important ingredient throughout the evolution of capitalism as means to secure markets and access to raw materials. Along with outright colonialism, informal empire helped shape and sustain the international division labor between the advanced manufacturing nations and those supplying raw materials and food. But the spread of informal empire as a substitute for formal colonial rule and the introduction of new mechanisms of control have been so pervasive since World War II as to give rise to the term neocolonialism. . . . While conventional thought in the United States and Western Europe generally rejects the validity the term,

in the former colonial world the existence of the phenomenon of neocolonialism is commonly recognized and discussed. (Magdoff 73)

In the neocolonial situation Euro-American states and multinational corporations has enabled the bourgeoisie once again to steal the economies and natural resources of the geographical areas called 'Third world'. The imperialist tradition in the world is today maintained not only by the military bases spread throughout the globe but also by the international bourgeoisie using the multinational using the multinational corporations. In this context Ngugi Wa Thiongo has been very apt to maintain throughout his illustrious career as a writer of African consciousness that this neocolonial situation political, economic and cultural domination has been enforced through "police boots, barbed wire, a gowned clergy and judiciary; their ideas are spread by a corpus of state intellectuals, academic and journalistic laureates of the neo-colonial establishment" (Thiongo 2). Imperialism as such is a real exploitative condition that, in its forms and methods, is still shaping the cultures, economies and political relations between different nations. Imperialism, as Lenin made clear in his book *Imperialism: The Last Stage of Capitalism* is the rule of consolidated finance capital which is supported and made possible by military hardware and technologies. This parasitic economic situation has affected and still is affecting the fate of billions of people. The Western finance capital working in the form of multinational corporations continues stealing from the countries and peoples of poorer countries in Asia and Africa. This imperialism, today protected by conventional and nuclear weapons, is led by the USA, which "presents the struggling peoples of the earth and all those calling for peace, democracy and socialism with the ultimatum: accept theft or death" (Thiongo 3).

The condition which Ngugi describes and criticizes in *Decolonising the Mind* is, as said above, termed as neocolonialism. What is usually meant by it is the existence of considerable foreign influence of a major world power in the

economic and political policies of a nominally independent nation. The relationship is designed and often supported by International Monetary Fund to benefit American hegemonic position in the world. This means a high degree of American influence on the economic policies and affairs of its client states. This also entails influence over political and military policies of those nations, especially in Middle East and Africa. Many ideological and cultural traditions have been carried over from colonial times. Similarly, “the continued membership of the former British and French colonies in the currency zones of the mother countries, for instance, facilitated the perpetuation of existing trade relations” (Magdoff 73). In the post-Second World War these trade and cultural relations were restructured by America to its own benefit and former imperial powers like Britain had to play second fiddle to the vastly expanding American empire. Most important of all is the continuity of the basic economic structure that had evolved during the European colonial enterprise. Coming out of the World War II as the most powerful economic and military power, the United States assumed the mantle of the non-communist bloc and began to manage that part of the world. During this period of imperial transition from Europe to America “a high priority was therefore given to keeping as much of the world as possible economically and politically hospitable to the continuation of traditional patterns of trade and investment” (.....74). As part of this strategy America built of a vast military infrastructure around the world, many of them located in the former colonies. This was supported by many military interventions and proxy in places like Vietnam, Columbia, Nicaragua, Congo, Balkans, Iran-Iraq War, and, most importantly, in Afghanistan. The war in Vietnam, which almost completely destroyed the country, was the most drastic of these direct military actions before imperial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. An equally outstanding instance of intervention, though non-military, was the overthrow of the democratically elected prime minister of Iran, Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953. Similarly, in the following year military was used to overthrow the Guatemala regime that had nationalized America’s banana plantations. These American military interventions continued during the Cold War years and later on culminated in what came to be known as ‘Afghan jihad’.

The contemporary imperial formation headed by United States is quite unprecedented. The great global empires of nineteenth and twentieth centuries bear little resemblance with the military and economic power of American empire. This empire heads the world which is so integrated, its operations are so geared to one another, and there is the enormous power of a constantly revolutionized technology in economies, and above all, in military force. Technology is more decisive in military affairs than ever before. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the current American empire is quite different from previous empires. This imperial project is in different from all other colonial enterprises in that “all other great powers and empires knew that they were not the only ones, and none aimed at global domination” (Hobsbawm, *Globalisation, Democracy* 156). Although the British Empire in the nineteenth century did operate across the entire planet, yet it did not achieve the dominant military position as achieved by America today. Commenting on the difference between British and American empire, maintains that

The US has never actually practiced colonialism except briefly during the international fashion for colonial imperialism at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The US operated instead with dependent and satellite states, notably in the western sphere, in which it had virtually no competitors. Unlike Britain, it developed a policy of armed intervention into these in the twentieth century”. (157)

Not only did American empire inherit and expand the economic and military policies of the former British Empire, it also inherited its ideology though with certain changes based on the idea of American exceptionalism. British Empire was British in identity, though some of its propagandists also tried to give it an altruistic hue in the form of bringing civilization to the ‘less civilized’ cultures of the world. As compared to this the present American empire traces its roots of exceptionalism back to its revolutionary war of independence and

presents itself as a universal alternative. Therefore, it believes that the rest of the world should follow it or it should even liberate the world and make it safe for democracy. Hobsbawm has made this clear at another place in his book *The New Century* where he has argued that America is a revolutionary power, based on a revolutionary ideology. “Like revolutionary France and Soviet Russia, America is not just a state, it is also a state dedicated to the transformation of the world in a certain manner. In this sense, American cultural hegemony has a political dimension which British hegemony never had” (Hobsbawm, *The New Century* 48). One of the important characteristics of American empire is that it has always wanted to convert the rest of the world to its own political and economic ideology, and this has given a strange messianic color to it. Though British hegemony too was culturally, economically and militarily very strong, but it never sought to attempt the organization of the whole world. Britishers did what they could to regulate the world according to their own interests, but not to dominate it entirely. America on the other hand has created a massive military-industrial complex that has given it power to claim world hegemony. “However, few things are more dangerous than empires pursuing their own interests in the belief that by doing so they are doing humanity a favor” (Hobsbawm, *Globalisation Democracy* 158).

There are so many other scholars in addition to Hobsbawm and Ngugi who have maintained through their theoretical and philosophical interventions that the world is hardly in any ‘post-colonial’ era. Scholars of the history of empire and its enabling discourses like Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, Terry Eagleton, Samir Amin and Edward Said etc. have also talked about the ascendancy of American empire in the late twentieth and early twenty first century. Roy’s *An Ordinary Persons Guide to Empire*, Samir Amin’s *Eurocentrism*, Terry Eagleton’s writings on Marxism and rising religious Right in Europe and America, Tariq Ali’s *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*, and Noam Chomsky in a number of historical surveys have reiterated what Edward Said argued throughout his writings on Palestine, Israel and American interventions in the Middle East. According to him:

Imperialism did not end, did not suddenly become 'past', once decolonization had set motion the dismantling of the classical empires. A legacy of connections still binds countries like Algeria and India to France and Britain respectively. . . Also the end of Cold War and of the Soviet Union has definitively changed the world map. The triumph of the United States as the last superpower suggests that a new set of force lines will structure the world, and they were already beginning to be apparent in the 1960s and 1970s. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 341)

Quoting Michael Barratt-Brown Said puts forward the case that exploitative imperial relations and economic structures are still the most powerful cultural, economic, political and military features of what has been called a New World Order. The less economically developed lands are still subjected to the power of economically developed and militarily advanced countries. Meanwhile, the rift between "rich and poor is being driven deeper and the battle to control the world's resources is intensifying. Economic colonialism through formal military aggression is staging a comeback" (Roy 302). Roy in her non-fictional essays has especially focused on the economic policies forced by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to argue that the structural adjustment programs are new ways of keeping poorer countries forever indebted to US economic and military interests. Like Roy Said too has talked about the immense rift between poor and rich states, and a relationship of unequal power-sharing in decision making within monetary and financial institutions. In this context Noam Chomsky concluded that during the 1980s

the 'North-South' conflict will not subside, and new forms of domination will have be devised to ensure that privileged segments of Western industrial society maintain substantial control over global resources, human and material, and benefit disproportionately from this control. Thus it comes as no surprise

that the reconstitution of ideology in the United States finds echoes throughout the industrial world . . . but it is an absolute requirement for the Western system of ideology that a vast gulf be established between the civilized West, with its traditional commitment to human dignity, liberty, and self-determination, and the barbaric brutality of those who for some reason – perhaps defective genes – fail to appreciate the depth of this historic commitment, so well revealed by America’s Asian wars, for example. (Chomsky 84-85)

An important feature of the Cold War period was America’s policy of containment of Soviet influence in the world in general and in Islamic countries in particular. Rather, as writers like Mahmood Mamdani have argued, Muslim countries of the Arab and non-Arab world were singled out for a special place in Cold War politics as a bulwark against godless communism. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began to operate covert actions in countries deemed hostile to American interests. Coupled with the Cold War exigencies was the continuing American military and financial support to Israeli occupation of historical Palestine. In 1967 Israel occupied rest of Palestine and extended its rule to the Golan Heights in Syria and Sinai in Egypt. Gaza became permanently a besieged territory. Israeli aggression against Lebanon in 1982 gave rise to armed groups of resistance, Hamas and Hezbollah. These groups overtly flaunted their Islamic identity as a result of which Israeli and American mainstream media began talk in terms of Islam’s supposedly inherent lack of progress and its conflict with what the Post-Second World War Orientalist Bernard Lewis called ‘Judeo-Christian Civilization’. In 1953 CIA and England’s intelligence agencies orchestrated a coup in Iran and installed Reza Shah as a dictator whose years of misrule and corrupt policies estranged Iranian people who finally overthrew him during a long resistance which culminated in the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. Reza Shah’s dictatorship was made possible by American support for his regime, and this angered Iranian people who saw it a sign of imperial double standard. On the one hand American politicians were talking of ‘making the world safe for

democracy’, and on the other hand, they were actively supporting dictatorships in the Arab world. This simmering discontent resulted not only in the overthrow of dictatorship but, since America supported it, also the capture of American Embassy by university and college students in Tehran. This event also brought ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslims’ into the consciousness of American people. ‘Islam’ became news. As Edward Said has reminded us in his book *Covering Islam*, almost all the mainstream news channels and radio talk shows beamed images of ‘angry’ Muslims on the screens. ‘Experts’ on Islam like Lewis and his ilk began to give a “sustained diet of information about a people, a culture, a religion – really no more than a poorly defined and badly misunderstood abstraction – always in case of Iran, represented as a militant, dangerous, and anti-American” (Said, *Covering Islam* 83). Said continues thus:

One expert was quoted as saying that “the loss of Iran to an Islamic form of government was the greatest setback the United States has had in recent years”. Islam, in other words, is by definition inimical to United States Interests. The Wall Street Journal had editorialized on November 20 that “civilization receding” came from the “decline of the Western powers that spread these (civilized) ideals”. (84)

Arguments like ‘Militant Islam’, ‘the Islam explosion’, and ‘the Muslim hatred of America’ gained common currency during and after this standoff between Iranian students who seized American embassy and the United States government. ‘The rage of Islam’ and ‘Clash of Islam’ thesis, as propounded by Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington and V. S. Naipaul, became a favorite theme of scholarly and media debates. All such debates tried to prove that Islam was one unchanging thing that could be grasped over and above the remarkably varied history, geography, and social structure and culture of a number of Islamic nations and more than one billion Muslims who live in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. Islam as a civilization began to be pitted against what they called a

‘universal’ Judeo-Christian civilization (the centuries old persecution and pogroms of Jews in Europe did not bother the proponents of Judeo-Christian civilization).

Along with Iranian Revolution and seizure of American embassy some other important events happened in the same years which would make binary oppositions between ‘civilized West’ and ‘backward Islam’ a common theme in Euro-American cultural landscape. One was the broadcasting of a movie named *Death of the Princes* which was run by the Public Broadcasting Service in 1980. It created a diplomatic feud between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia. Then after the disintegration of USSR, the first Gulf war and the subsequent rise of Taliban in war torn Afghanistan, which upto then had been America’s main ally against the communist regime, amplified the negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims in the Western cultural forums. Taliban’s takeover of Kabul and NATO’s unrelenting bombardment of Iraq fueled the nineteenth century old Orientalist representations of Islam and Arabs. Saddam Hussein and Mulla Omer, who until then were America’s main allies against Iran and USSR respectively, came to be treated as representing ‘true Islam’. There was hardly a prime-time television show without several episodes of patently racist and insulting caricatures of Muslims. Islam and Muslims tended to be represented in unqualified categorical and generic terms. One Muslim came to represent all Muslims and Islam in general. During those 1970s, 80s and 90s new geopolitical-intellectual setting the public image of Islam in West was invariably presented in a confrontational relationship with Western, ‘our’ civilization and culture. It is in this context that Edward Said has argued that

Such representations of Islam have regularly testified to a penchant for dividing the world into pro- and anti-American (or pro- and anticommunist), an unwillingness to report political processes, an imposition of patterns and values that are ethnocentric or irrelevant or both, pure misinformation, repetition, an avoidance of detail, an

absence of genuine perspective. All of this can be traced, not to Islam, but to aspects of society in the West and to the media which this idea of “Islam” reflects and serves. The result is that we have divided the world into Orient and Occident – the old Orientalist thesis pretty much unchanged – the better to blind ourselves not only to the world but to ourselves and to what our relationship to the so-called Third World has really been . . . one is that a specific picture – for it is that – of Islam has been supplied. Another is that its meaning or message has on the whole continued to be circumscribed and stereotyped. A third is that a confrontational situation has been created, pitting “us” against “Islam”. A fourth is that this reductive image of Islam has had ascertainable results in the world of Islam itself. (Said, *Covering Islam* 44)

Naipaul, Clash of Civilizations Thesis: Enablers of Empire

It is in this historical and political context that V. S. Naipaul set out to explore non-Arab Muslim countries to find out what he thought was happening in that part of the world. The historical moment was dominated by apocalyptic images of an eternal conflict between ‘West’ and ‘Islam’. As argued earlier in this chapter, stereotypical representations of Islam and its culture were beamed on people on a daily basis. Writers like Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington were talking in terms of a civilizational clash. Muslims and Islam had replaced communism and USSR as a ‘threat’ to the ‘freedoms’ and ‘liberties’ of the Western world. Ayatollah Khomeini, Saddam Hussein and Taliban had become new Hitler and Lenin in Euro-American policy circles and cultural forms like Hollywood and mainstream media. Experts of area studies like Lewis had begun to talk of a “return of Islam” as a threat to what he called a Western modernity and Judeo-Christian civilization. Idea of ‘West’ as some kind of ‘Universal civilization’ had begun to be touted not only by mainstream journalists but also by scholars like Huntington and Fukuyama. Francis Fukuyama even declared an ‘end

of history' and final triumph of Western neoliberal economic and cultural policies. Western history almost became synonymous with the History. These popular and academic debates about 'Islam' and 'West' were full of clichés and stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. Ever since the demise of the Soviet Union there had been a rush by some scholars and journalists in the United States to find in an Orientalized Islam a new empire of evil. "Consequently, both the electronic and the print media have been awash with demeaning stereotypes that lump together Islam and terrorism, or Arabs and violence, or the Orient and tyranny (Said, *Orientalism* 347).

There was this particular kind of ideological consensus among media, military strategists, Middle Eastern area studies experts, and governments that Islam is a threat to Western civilization. Naipaul too participated in this corporate business of creating negative images of Islam which continue to be very much more prevalent than any others, and "that such images correspond not to what Islam is . . . but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be" (Said, *Covering Islam* 144). My point is that those actors like V. S. Naipaul and Lewis had power and privilege to propagate that picture of Islam. According to Said:

Much in current representations of Islam is designed to show the religion's inferiority with reference to the West, which Islam is supposedly hell-bent on opposing, competing with, resenting and being enraged at. Moreover, important journals of opinion such as the New Yorker, the New York Review of Books, and Atlantic Monthly never carry essays (or even literary works) in translation by Muslim and Arab authors but rely on experts such as Viorist to interpret political and cultural actualities shaped not by the facts but by unexamined presuppositions such as the above. Very rarely do critiques of these practices stray into the mainstream to challenge their hegemony. (Said, *Covering Islam* xxvi)

One of the arguments of my thesis is that though Naipaul's earlier novels gave expression to postcolonial identities and aspirations, especially of the diasporic communities, a marked shift occurred in his ideological orientation. According to Patrick French, V. S. Naipaul stopped writing about postcolonial societies from the perspective of the subaltern nations. This ideological shift occurred during the 1970s and 1980s when, according to Edward Said, erstwhile radical writers and philosophers like Foucault began a conservative turn (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 29-30). It is the same period when neoliberal economic system and political liberalism of western democracies intensified its war against Soviet communism, enlisting the support of authoritarian and unpopular Arab monarchies in the process. Western cultural and political onslaught, under the leadership of United States of America and through international institutions like International Monetary Fund, World Bank and NATO, began to reassert its global power. From Latin America to Korean Peninsula, and in Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Libya, American military industrial complex began to attack the nation states which had gained independence from European colonialism after the devastation of the Second World War. During the period of Afghan Jihad, Iranian Revolution and first Gulf War, the area studies experts and mainstream media think tanks in the Euro-American academic world began to publish their analysis of Islam's relationship with the Western world. Western scholars like Bernard Lewis, Samuel Huntington, Sania Hamady, Raphael Patai, Harold Glidden and other American Arabists began to marshal their academic standing in the power centers to explain the so-called "Arab mind" to the world. The idea is that if you peel off the external and secondary influences of history and personal experience, an unchanging and transhistorical category called "Muslim" and "Arab" will show itself in its true colour. In other words, Arabs and Muslims are treated as fixed, stable, in need of investigation, and even in need of knowledge about themselves. These Western think tanks and mandarins resort to age old and hackneyed Orientalist clichés to account for the causes of the immanent political conflicts between Muslim nation states and Euro-American powers. I argue in my thesis that it is in this context that V. S. Naipaul has written his two travelogues titled

Among the Believers and *Beyond Belief* about four Muslim majority nations during the later three decades of the twentieth century. I argue that instead of presenting a dispassionate picture of the social, economic and political changes occurring in these Muslim countries, Naipaul uses the Orientalist tropes and images to formulate his theory of what he calls “parasitism” of “Islamic” and of Muslims. He also develops the idea of a “Universal Western Civilization” as opposed to the non-West, particularly Islam. Like the nineteenth century Orientalists writing about Islam, he also uses water-tight binaries like ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, ‘West’ vs. ‘Islam’ in order to formulate his own version of clash of civilizations. I maintain that Naipaul has many ideological similarities with Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, two other proponents of clash theory. I locate his interventions within this clash of civilizations paradigm, and therefore, I argue that these formulations about Islam and Muslims act as contemporary versions of nineteenth century Orientalist colonial discourse which were used to justify and perpetuate colonial intervention in Muslims and Arab lands. Therefore, I think it will be apt here to discuss Lewis and Huntington, other two proponents of clash theory, in some detail.

Bernard Lewis published his famous article “The Roots of Muslim Rage” in September 1990 issue of *The Atlantic*. In this article Lewis posited the thesis that ‘Muslims’ throughout the world resent ideologically secular and technologically advanced, and, thereby, historically superior, ‘Judeo-Christian Western civilization’. He purports to explain this ‘bitterness’ by finding the so-called ‘roots of Muslim rage’. The insidious title itself suggests Lewis’ ideological location and perspective of seeing the world historical experience in reductive binary terms. He formulates the perspective that ‘Muslims’ reject western civilization not because what it does but because what it is, and the values and principles (democracy, secularism, science, human rights) that it professes and practices. By positing a ‘holy war’ ideology at the heart of Islam’s relations with the non-Islam, Lewis gives rise to the thesis of ‘clash of civilizations’, a clash, according to him, in which ideologically motivated hatred bred by ‘Islam’ is

supposed to be against a well-meaning and liberal 'West'. The 'clash', according to Lewis, began with "the advent of Islam, in the seventh century, and has continued virtually to the present day". Lewis, in a way, invents the category of 'the Muslim' dominated by cultural, i.e. Islamic influences, and shorn of the multifarious historical and personal experiences that characterize human beings. Other social, political, economic and intellectual choices of Muslim societies are given no weight in considering their relationship with the Euro-American world. We are made to believe that the global religious revival of Islam in the form of 'Islamic Fundamentalism' alone determines the contours and structure of the Muslim response to the colonial experience of the past and present. In this way Lewis lays the causes of the 'clash' at the door of 'religious revival' in the Muslim world without taking into consideration other possible causes and influences that otherwise shape human behavior and history. In explaining the Muslim response to the West he does not take into account the support provided by the liberal Western governments to the authoritarian dictatorships around the world. He does not consider it worthwhile to look for the causes of 'Muslim rage' at other places like European and American imperial and exploitative economic policies; rather he uses his supposedly objective scholarship and knowledge of Islam to explain the rise of religious elite hell bent upon destroying the 'universal' Judeo-Christian civilization'. As he infamously puts it: "This is no less than a clash of civilizations – the perhaps irrational but surely historical reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both" (Lewis 60)

According to Lewis 'the West' was able to advance in all spheres of life as against Islamic world because it was able not only to separate but also to make a distinction between the spheres of religion and politics: "render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God which are God's". So instead of explaining the unequal power relations between 'the west' and 'Islam' by looking into diverse and historically contingent factors like imperialism, capitalism, slavery, racism, colonialism, and neo-colonial and neoliberal economic policies,

Lewis resorts to the common Orientalist cliché of culture being the main source and fountain of inferiority or superiority between the two diverse peoples, in this case 'Islam' and 'West'. He suggests, speaking in sweeping terms, that it is the 'Islam' that has 'inspired' hatred directed against 'us', i.e. 'the west'. In explaining "this surge of hatred" nowhere does he take stock of the continuing American imperial meddling into the affairs of countries like Iran, Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, or the unconditional support given by successive western, and especially American, governments to the settler colonialism of Zionists in historical Palestine. Instead of formulating a critical appraisal of the American policy vis-a-vis the part of the world largely populated by Muslims, Lewis expresses his happiness that "there is still an imposing Western presence – cultural, economic, and diplomatic – in Muslim world". In this way he exonerates from any blame in one go the centuries old experience of colonial pillage and stereotyping of colonized other.

This Orientalist perspective of cultural determinism formulated by Lewis was later on adopted by Samuel Huntington and elaborated extensively in his book *Clash of Civilizations* to account for the post-World War Second "pattern of conflicts". Following Bernard Lewis and V. S. Naipaul, Huntington claims to account for the current and coming world conflicts. According to him the coming wars will not be fought for economic or ideological reasons. Rather, the source of global conflagration will be culture, and in particular the culture of Islam. The shape of the wars will be determined by the supposedly homogeneous and ahistorical characteristics of cultures, especially of Islam. The conflicts will be nothing short of a clash of civilizations. As Huntington puts it in his article "The Clash of Civilizations?" published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993: "The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future". This article itself is the product of the Olin Institute's project on "The Changing Security Environment and the American National Interests". The very title of the project reveals Huntington's priorities to serve American national interests, rather than to provide a dispassionate and

intellectual analysis of the events occurring in the world. He divides the world into different civilizational blocks like Western, Islamic, Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Latin American, and African, each characterized by homogeneous markers of identification and with different levels of cultural and scientific advancement. The factors differentiating one civilization from another are language, culture, tradition, and, most importantly, religion. He argues that in the post-Cold War world differences based on ideology, political and economic systems will wane, and the differences characterized by civilizational consciousness will increase in all the disparate cultural blocks of the world. According to him, “The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line” in the world” (Huntington 31). After providing a reductively cursory view of relations of the Muslim world with other cultures, Huntington triumphantly claims that “Islam has bloody borders”. He mainly holds ‘Islam’ or ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, treated as a transhistorical phenomenon, responsible for the continuing violence between Western and Muslim world, spoken of in sweeping and homogeneous terms. Islam and the peoples it represents are spoken of as fixed and inert categories devoid of any change across history and geographies. This has become a dominant ideological trope that recurs ceaselessly in the mainstream writings about Islam in the Western area studies departments.

One of the contentions of this thesis is that Naipaul, like Lewis and Huntington, too operates within the overarching ideological narrative of Orientalism and the ‘clash theory’. His chief contribution to this new kind of late twentieth century imperial discourse is his development of the idea of ‘West’ as a ‘Universal Civilization’ and Muslim ‘parasitism’. Both these ideological constructions run deeply throughout his travel narratives about Muslim countries and his discourse about ‘Islam’ and ‘Islamic fundamentalism’. These ideas were developed during the end of Cold War era when, paradoxically speaking, political Islam itself was the most important ideological ally of Western countries led by USA to defeat Soviet communism. All the Muslim countries Naipaul writes about and denounces as merely “parasitic”, except Iran, in his travelogues were staunch

supporters of USA, and 'Islamic fundamentalism' was not only funded but also materially supported by Western countries to bring a downfall of Soviet Union. It was also done, as Tariq Ali has demonstrated in his book of interviews titled *Speaking of Empire and Resistance*, to defeat nationalist and anti-colonial liberation movements with the Muslim world. Shah of Iran and General Zia of Pakistan, along with Saddam Hussein and Afghan Mujahidin, later called Taliban, fought against Soviet Union on behalf of their Western allies headed by USA. This sordid history of USA's contribution to the development of what Naipaul calls 'Muslim aggressiveness' (Naipaul, *Beyond Belief* 84) is brilliantly demonstrated by Mahmood Mamdani in his important work on the development of Political Islam called *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*. Writers like Ali, Mamdani, Chomsky and Said complicate the simplistic binaries between 'Islamic fundamentalism' and 'Western Universal Civilization' which is created by V. S. Naipaul and others. Naipaul's idea of 'Universal Civilization' was developed clearly against what Islam and its culture stands for, and, therefore, it is full of Orientalist clichés and binaries between 'developed West' and 'backward looking Islam'. This idea of 'universal civilization', which he perfected in *Among the Believers*, was later on given a shape in the form of The Wriston lecture delivered by Naipaul at the Manhattan Institute of New York, on October, 1990, and published on the Op-Ed page of The New York Times as "Our Universal Civilization", where

It keeps company with a perfectly supplementary William Safire essay on "Stopping the Saddam Bomb". A decade back, during the Iran hostage crisis, Naipaul had first perfected his orientalist opposition between a generous "civilization" and a parasitic "barbarism. In 1990, we find recurring in a depressingly unadjusted mode, both his terms for explicating a Western-Islamic crisis and the public appeal to Naipaul as an expert on Islam. (Nixon 152)

In *Among the Believers* this idea of “our universal civilization” is closely developed in relation to “Islam’s” “parasitic” dependence on the “West”. Almost all his encounters with different peoples of different backgrounds are capped with the suggestion of an Islamic hypocrisy, as he formulates it. Muslims are said to depend on the technology and “goods of Europe” (Naipaul, *Among the Believers* 401) in order to survive in the modern world, which itself is presented to have been created mainly by Western industry and knowledge. According to V. S. Naipaul, Muslims remain reliant on Western technologies and goods but at the same time are hostile to it. For example, while touring through Malaysia Naipaul concludes one of the sections with the following observations:

The pleasures of money in Malaysia were simple. Money magnified the limitations of places like Malaysia, small, uneducated, and coming late to everything. Money – from oil, rubber, tin, palm oil – changed old ways. But money only turned people into buyers of imported goods, fixed the country in a dependent relationship with the developed world, kept all men colonials. (Naipaul, *Among the Believers* 266)

The insinuation is that the Malaysians do not deserve the money they have, while there is absolutely no discussion of the processes and technologies that Malaysians may have created to make this money. The impression that is given to the Western readership, for whom these books were written, is that the Muslims throughout the world are merely consumers. They do not create anything and therefore do not deserve the benefits of modernity. Modernity as a historical process from past to the present developed form of civilization is purely a Western process, and rest of the peoples, especially Muslims, have no contribution to this development. Naipaul comes to the same kind of ‘conclusion’ about Indonesia too. In a section where he writes about his dialogues on “Islamization” of Indonesia with Imaduddin, a Muslim and Sumatran, Naipaul argues that the “international community, the universal civilization: providers of tape recorders,

and psychological games and higher degrees in electrical engineering; and now, guardians of Indonesian art and civilizations” (Naipaul, *Among the Believers* 375). The apparent idea clearly is that the Muslims and their culture are not parts of “international community”. They are not contributors to the world culture and civilization. They have not and still are not creating anything. They are just borrowers, parasites on the world civilization. Their ideas and technology and science are all taken from other cultures. And what is more “they” are ungrateful. Naipaul seems to suggest that so far as social, political, economic, and technological institutions are concerned they are purely “Western” inventions and rest of the world is only dependent on what the ‘West’ has created. This is a typical nineteenth century Orientalist trope according to which the civilization is a product of Western engagement with nature and its processes whereas the Oriental Arabs (Muslims) are purely ‘religious’ and whose actions can only be understood in terms of their mysterious and superstitious religious doctrines. The point is that Western ways of thinking and feeling are alien to Muslims who are thought of as some kind of essentialized beings for whom the normal processes of history are quite immaterial. West is dynamic, creative, original, and rational; Muslims are static, uncreative, imitative, and irrational. In this mode of thought nothing about Muslims can be understood without taking into consideration the pernicious influence of ‘Islam’ which, according to Naipaul, makes “imperial demands on people” and which “was a complicated religion. It wasn’t philosophical or speculative. It was a revealed religion, with a Prophet and a complete set of rules. To believe, it was necessary to know a lot about the Arabian origins of the religion, and to take this knowledge to heart” (Naipaul, *Among the Believers* 7). About such kind of Orientalist representation of Islam Edward Said comments that:

For Orientalism, Islam had a meaning which, if one were to look for its most succinct formulation, could be found in Renan’s first treatise: in order best to be understood Islam had to be reduced to “tent and tribe”. The impact of colonialism, of worldly

circumstances, of historical development: all these were to Orientalists as flies to wanton boys, killed – or disregarded – for their sport, never taken seriously enough to complicate the essential Islam. (Said, *Orientalism* 105)

For Naipaul this figure of parasite is very important, and as Rob Nixon teaches us, Naipaul applied this to Trinidadians, Argentinians, Uruguayans, Indians, Iranians, and Pakistanis. However, it is in *Among the Believers* that this figure appears persistently in relation to Islam's relation to the "our universal civilization" created by West. For Naipaul this "parasitism" is most pervasive in "colonial" societies, uninventive cultures lulled by their dependency on "Western civilization". Islam and its culture is presented as one of these "colonial" cultures which are said to be held back principally by habits of self-destructive dependency. According to Nixon "Naipaul expresses this sentiment tersely in an essay on Trinidad, where he pronounces against the new politics, the curious reliance of men on institutions they [are] yet working to undermine" . . . of the Uruguayans he observes:

[They] say that they are European nation, that they have always had their back to the rest of South America. It was their great error, and is part of their failure. Their habits of wealth made them, profoundly, a colonial people, educated but intellectually null, consumers, parasitic on the culture and technology of others. (Nixon 144).

From this it is abundantly clear that Naipaul had already developed this idea in relation to other previously colonized nations and societies. In such an analysis no serious consideration is given to the centuries long imperial and colonial policies of economic loot which these countries suffered at the hands of Western imperial powers. Colonialism at its simplest form is an organized theft of the natural resources of the colonized peoples, and while discussing the current situation of once colonized countries one cannot afford not to take into account

the continuing unequal power relations between these countries. Their histories are interdependent, and one's development cannot be understood without also taking into consideration how those colonized nations were underdeveloped during colonial era.

However, in *Among the Believers*, when he writes about Islam and Muslims, 'parasitic' and its other equivalents are his routine epithets. It occurs many times during his conversations with Muslims from Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran and Malaysia. The underlying assumption of all those observations is the mutual incompatibility of "Islam" and the modern Western world, and "Islam's" chronic technological and scientific dependence on West. In a section titled "the Rule of Ali" Naipaul concludes his discussion with a taxi driver as

The hotel driver could be helped through the evening traffic jams by the Koranic readings on his car radio; and when we got back to the hotel there would be mullahs on television. Certain modern goods and tools – cars, radios, televisions – were necessary; their possession was part of proper Islamic pride. But these things were not associated with any particular faith or civilization; they were thought of as the stock of some great universal bazar. (Naipaul, *Among the Believers* 33)

This and such other statements recur throughout this book. They show an essentialized understanding of human civilization by treating civilizations as separate and water-tight compartments. Naipaul's treats cultures and civilizations only in antagonistic terms. In his worldview there is no place for confluence of processes and histories which actually have given rise to human civilization. Civilizations have developed through give and take processes. They have never developed in isolation. As Ranjit Hoskote and Ilija Trojanow have argued in their scholarly history, *Confluences: Forgotten Histories from East and West*, that all cultures have borrowed from each other and that the current "modernity" is by no means a European invention. They argue that mingling and confluence of different

and dissimilar cultures is lifeblood of civilizations; no culture has ever been isolated, pure and monolithic. They question such ideologies of purity as are constructed by thinkers like Lewis, Huntington and V. S. Naipaul, who

. . . believe that societies can only function when they boast of a homogeneous, home grown culture that has developed from the core of a certain nation: one tradition, one religion, one people. They define difference as static and unbridgeable. They are oblivious to the concealed entanglements of an ancestry and the local variations of transcontinental narratives. Theirs is a flawed conviction, for it is blind to history. (Hoskote and Trojanow 1-2)

In this context, they argue that the writers like V. S. Naipaul have presented Islam as a regressive, intolerant religion, and thus have “popularised the idea that contact with Islam has been catastrophic for other cultures – that Islam has wiped out all signs of the cultures it has supplanted, that Islam is an unfinished project that is only waiting for an opportunity for world domination. This is no more than a projection of the aims and methods of European colonialism” (186). In other words, the late twentieth century discourse about the conflict between “Islam” and “West”, a discourse which runs deeply throughout Naipaul’s travel narratives, functions as an ideology that justifies the imperial interventions of USA in different Arab and Muslim nations. Naipaul’s ideas about West as a ‘universal civilization’ and “Islam” as parasitic help create cultural ideas and ideologies that lend a legitimacy to American global expansionism. Empires do not live by force alone. They need beliefs, visions to survive and earn popular support. What redeems empires is an idea: ‘universal western civilization’ bringing democracy and human rights to ‘parasitic’ Muslim ‘fundamentalists’.

This idea that Islam is dependent on West while at the same time rejects it is further made explicit in a section called ‘The Disorder of the Law’. He argues here that though Islamic revivalists denounce the West, they remain reliant on

Western technologies and goods to a degree that compromises their principled hostility. Naipaul writes:

The West, or the universal civilization it leads, is emotionally rejected. It undermines; it threatens. But at the same time it is needed, for its machines, goods, medicines, warplanes, the remittances from the emigrants, the hospitals that might have a cure for calcium deficiency, the universities that will provide master's degrees in mass media. All the rejection of the West is contained within the assumption that there will always exist out there a living, creative, civilization, oddly neutral, open to all to appeal to. Rejection, therefore, is not absolute rejection. It is also, for the community as a whole, a way of ceasing to strive intellectually. It is to be parasitic; parasitism is one of the unacknowledged fruits of fundamentalism. (Naipaul, *Among the Believers* 168)

This comparison with Islam is central to Naipaul's construction of 'universal civilization'. He operates in Manichean terms. One can argue that in order to develop an image of an "open" and "tolerant" West he needed a "dependent" and "aggressive" Islam. One the one had there is, for Naipaul, the creative, living, open "universal civilization"; and on the other, the resentful, parasitic and inert cultures of Islam. It is in this context that Rob Nixon maintains that

. . . in choosing Islamic bad faith as the high theme of his book, he assumes, without question, the good faith of the West in its dealing with his four Islamic societies. The West is constantly portrayed as exploited by lesser societies resentful of benign, or at worst, neutral, creativity. Indeed, Naipaul is so decided in his distribution of moral and cultural worth between the cultures of anarchic rage and the "universal civilization" that he ends up demonizing Islam

almost as routinely as the most brittle-minded of his Islamic interlocutors demonize the West. (Nixon 148)

The same theory of West as a “universal civilization”, developed against the “imperial demands” of Islam, finds a fuller and a kind of a personal exposition in the fourth annual Walter B. Wriston lecture in Public Policy, sponsored by the Manhattan Institute. The Institute describes itself as an “important force in shaping American political culture and developing ideas that foster economic choice and individual responsibility . . . Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, at the NYPD’s request we launched a policy division to advise police on the development of counterterrorism strategy” (*Manhattan Institute*). It is clear from the Institutes website itself that this institute has been deeply involved in planning and advising the American government. In other words, it is not a neutral institute of knowledge creation; rather it is an enterprise which has deeply embedded itself in the American economic and political policy making. This kind of nexus has been central to supposedly ‘objective’ analysis of other cultures; a nexus between power and knowledge of which Edward Said writes in *Orientalism*. It supports neoliberal economic policies and American military interventions in the Muslim lands. It is in this Institute that in 1990 Naipaul gave his lecture entitled “Our Universal Civilization”. Naipaul claims that it this Western ‘universal civilization’ that gave him ‘both the prompting and the idea of the literary vocation; and also gave the means to fulfill that prompting; the civilization that enables me to make that journey from the periphery to the center . . . I couldn’t have become the kind of writer I am in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union or black Africa. I do not think I could have taken my gifts even to India’. Naipaul goes on to say

But I have never formulated the idea of the universal civilization until quite recently – until eleven years ago, when I traveled for many months in a number of non-Arab countries to try to understand what had driven them to their rage. That Muslim rage was just beginning to be apparent . . . what they spoke of more was

“the revival of Islam”. And that, indeed, to anyone contemplating from a distance, was a puzzle. Islam, which had apparently had so little to offer its adherents in the last century and in the first half of this – what did it have to offer to an infinitely more educated, infinitely faster, world in the later years of the century. (Naipaul *The Writer and the World* 507-508).

The thoughts which he had been expressing in his travelogues are given full exposition here. The binary opposition between “West” and “Islam” is at the heart of this formulation. West leads to art, culture, science, literature, technology, in short, to history; Islam is inert, incapable of giving anything to its adherents, dependent, and what is more, Islam leads to “rage”. Three hundred years of West’s colonization of the poorer countries of Africa and Asia is forgotten because it enables Naipaul “to make that journey from the periphery to the center”. Since ‘our universal civilization’ helps Naipaul to shun his culture in order to move to the “centre”, slavery of Africans, genocide of Native Americans and Aborigines, the ravages of World War I and II, and the Holocaust, all part of the story of Western civilization, can be condoned. These dirty truths about Western imperial and exploitative civilization are hidden under the rug in order to create a positive picture of a ‘universal civilization’. “The rage of Islam” trope is straight away taken from Bernard Lewis’s formulations about Islam and Muslims. The corner stone of this kind of typical Orientalist thought is that it is the culture of “Islam” that makes these people incapable of negotiating with the challenges of “modernity”. In this way of thinking Islam is divorced from history, economics, and political exigencies. Normal processes of development are denied to it and to its culture. The diverse and heterogeneous cultures and societies are spoken as one essentialized and homogenous entity. This cultural discourse borders on racism and Islamophobia. This is what Chomsky calls ‘reconstitution of ideology’, and according to Said, whose elements include

. . . notions about Western Judeo-Christian triumphalism, the inherent backwardness of the non-Western world, the dangers of various foreign creeds, the proliferation of 'anti-democratic' conspiracies, the celebration and recuperation of canonical works, authors, and ideas. Inversely, other cultures are more and more looked at through the perspectives of pathology and/or therapy. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 367)

It is because of such attitudes towards other cultures like Islam that phrases like "rage", "nihilism", "fantasy" and "neurosis" abound in Naipaul's observations about Islam and Muslims. His lecture about Islam is a perfect example of attributing pathological tendencies to another culture. His observations are an exercise in othering. This ideological construction gives less than human attributes to the other. "Islam" is an "alien faith" and therefore, Muslims of Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran and Malaysia are colonized by it and removed from themselves. They are "converts", and Naipaul talks as if the people belonging to "our universal civilization" are not "converts". This conversion is not specific to Islam. Whole of Euro-American world is a converted society. But, for Naipaul, only Muslims are converts, and therefore, they suffer from "neurosis". Accepting Islam as a spiritual and social way of life is considered a "colonization". Naipaul continues:

I was soon to discover that no colonization had been so thorough as the colonization that had come with the Arab faith. Colonized or defeated peoples can begin to distrust themselves. The Muslim countries I am talking about, this distrust had all the force of religion. It was an article of the Arab faith that everything before the faith is wrong, misguided, heretical . . . (Naipaul *The Writer and the World* 508)

In Naipaulian discourse no agency is given to the Muslims themselves. No attention is paid to what they might have to say about "conversion". What is

important for Naipaul is that it very nicely fits his definition of 'universal civilization'. "Islam" colonizes; "West" liberates. "Islam" destroys history; "West" creates one. "Islam" leads to neurosis and rage; "West" leads to understanding and tolerance. "Islam" defaces one's personality; "West" gives a sense of individualism and personal vocation.

Such creation of binaries is fundamental to the clash of civilizations theory, according to which "Islam" is "West's" enemy. This ideological understanding of human civilization has been criticized by many theorists and historian. They argue that if one believes, as Naipaul does, that the civilization of the West is superior, and the civilization of the "other" is inferior, one is committing a mistake, because the so-called universal or Western civilization is, in reality, the culmination of the "plundering of the rest of the world" (Nandy ix). The modern Western civilization cannot be thought of without also taking into account the centuries of genocides of Natives, slavery of Africans, loot and plunder of Indian subcontinent, scramble for Africa, and the continuing unequal and exploitative relations fostered by World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Today what 'our universal' civilization stands for is the result of the centuries of exploitation and plundering of the rest of the world. Naipaul's clean account of Western progress itself suffers from 'a loss of history'. He had to commit a historical erasure in order to construct a "tolerant", "open", and "dynamic" image of West. Roger Garaudy, in the foreword to Ashis Nandy's *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias* (1999), has aptly maintained that the Western modal of growth is characterized by blind production of things, whether useful of useless, including destructive weapons. Such growth in the Western world was possible only by plundering the rest of the world. In addition to this, Western scramble for natural resources continued with the race for the possession of oil in the Middle East and created the mess and violence that one witnesses. Garaudy observes that 'underdevelopment' is not a condition of backwardness; rather it has been created by the growth of the West. While constructing the neat narrative of Western progress Naipaul's discourse too suffers from the historical amnesia that

he associates with “Islam”. It is in this context that Ania Loomba has said in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* that the representations of the ‘Orient’ in European literary texts, travelogues and other writings, contributed to the creation of a dichotomy between Europe and its ‘others’:

. . . a dichotomy that was central to the creation of European culture as well as to the maintenance and extension of European hegemony over other lands. Said’s project is to show how ‘knowledge’ about non-Europeans was part of the processes of maintaining power over them. (Loomba 43)

Writing in another context about Joseph Conrad, but concerning similar issues, Edward Said argues that writers like V. S. Naipaul, Graham Green and others “deliver the non-European world either for analysis and judgment or for satisfying the exotic tastes of European and North American audiences. For

if it is true that Conrad ironically sees the imperialism of the San Tome silver mine’s British and American owners as doomed by its own pretentious and impossible ambition, it is also true that he writes as a man whose Western view of non-Western world is so ingrained as to blind him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations . . . Few readers today, after Vietnam, Iran, the Philippines, Algeria, Cuba, Nicaragua, Iraq, would disagree that it is precisely the fervent innocence of Green’s Pyle or Naipaul’s Father Huismans, men for whom the native can be educated into ‘our’ civilization, that turns out to produce the murder, subversion, and endless instability of ‘primitive’ societies. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* xxi)

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Chapter III

Islam, West, and V. S. Naipaul's Construction of Islam as a 'Threat'

Islam has always been a very important topic of discussion in the Western world. From the late seventh century itself, when Arab armies began to spread in all directions beyond Hejaz, Islam and its Prophet became a subject of annals of history. The most important Arab conquests during this period took place in the lands which were part of Christendom. Egypt, Spain, Syria, and Palestine were until then major centers of Eastern Roman Empire. The conquest of these lands was followed rapidly by conversion of Christians and Jews into the fold of Islam. Arabs established dominions throughout these lands and posed a political challenge to the Christian empire. In other words, the encounters between these two Abrahamic religions from the very beginning were not solely religious, but were shaped by political exigencies of empire formation. Islam was not seen just as any other religion, but a threat to the very existence of Roman Christian Empire. This image of Islam as a religious and political threat intensified during the medieval period when it was given a further boost by the Christian Crusades against Muslims. Crusaders and their theologians presented Islam as heresy and the Prophet of Islam as imposter. This hostile image of Islam proliferated during Turkish Empires imperial adventures into European mainland. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 and then the siege of Vienna in the seventeenth century gave further impetus to the centuries old European distrust of Islam. Then during modern period of Western colonialism, slavery, and occupation of Muslim lands, Muslims began increasingly to be seen as backward barbarians, a phenomenon of which Edward Said has done an excellent study in *Orientalism*. He has extensively studied the Western scholarship to show that a deep distrust of Islam and Muslims has been integral to the self-representation of Europe as a cradle of civilization and progress. Europe has had a long tradition of conceptions of Orient, especially Islam, dating back to the first contacts between the two civilizations.

Islam, in particular, and Orient, in general, was not only geographically adjacent to Europe; rather during modern era it was

. . . also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience . . . Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. (Said, *Orientalism* 2)

“Islam” and “Our Universal Civilization”: Construction of a Coercive Binary Opposition

This largely political conflict between the two cultures has given rise to ideologically inflected images, stereotypes, tropes and discourses, based on essentialized and homogenized binaries, which continue to circumscribe what can be said about Muslims and Islam in the Western mainstream media and scholarship. Much of the orientalist discourse, which still informs much of the Western writings on Islam, is designed to show Islam's inferiority and backwardness with reference to the 'Western' civilizations (thought of as one homogenous entity from Classical Greece to the present US Empire), “which Islam is supposed to be hell-bent on opposing, competing with, resenting, and being enraged at” (Said, *Covering Islam* xxv).

This politically fraught relationship between Western world and Muslim World has been made more complicated because “over the last 200 years, until the threshold of the twenty-first century, Muslims around the world have been engaged in a vital confrontation first with European colonialism and after the

demise of that calamity with the rise of the US empire”. According to Hamid Dabashi

This fateful confrontation has meant a systematic corrosion of the innate cosmopolitanism of Islamic cultures and its gradual mutation into a singular site of ideological resistance to foreign domination – in both political and cultural terms. The rise of Islamic ideologies worldwide corroborated the centrality of European capitalist modernity in which its colonial edges were categorically denigrated and denied agency – a reality against which a series of anti-colonial ideologies and movements took shape, among them both Christian and Islamic liberation theologies. (Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology* 25)

This ‘fateful confrontation’ has gained a particularly ugly shape after the Second World War when the new US empire began to stretch its muscles into Muslim lands which had achieved political independence from French and British colonialisms. The situation was made worse by events that would, by the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of twenty first, lead writers like Lewis, Naipaul and Huntington to speak in terms of an intractable ‘clash’ between ‘West’ and ‘Islam’, a late twentieth century form of imperial discourse to justify the US military interventions in the Middle East. Events like deposition of Mohammad Mosaddeq by Euro-American intelligence services, the Iranian Revolution against Shah of Iran - an American ally, American embassy hostage crisis, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, rise of Taliban, American invasion of Iraq in early 1990, and Al Qaeda’s attack on World Trade Centre made Islam and its diverse cultures a ‘news’ in the Western world. In this context, as Dabashi has argued in *Brown Skin, White Masks*, racist images of old Orientalist scholarship got a new lease of life and “brown has become the new black and Muslims the new Jew” (Dabashi, *Brown Skin* 6). As a result of imperial situation occurring in the late twentieth century race in Euro-American world began to be recodified and Muslims and

their diverse cultures became the main targets of racist representations and cultural forms. On the one hand this end of the century colonial discourse was full of blatant racist implications and slurs against Islam in general and Muslims in particular, and, on the other, it sanitized “the United States’ imperialist adventurism (most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq) and the armed robbery of Palestinians’ homeland by a band of European colonialists that calls itself Israel – a process by which the Western imperialist powers have come to appear as legitimate and even innocent bystanders, and even, victims of a global barbarism targeting their Western civilization” (Dabashi 6). This racist framing of Islam and Muslims as backward and barbarian can be, for example, understood from what Peter Rodman, former National Security Council member, wrote in the *National Review* of May 11, 1992. He wrote

Yet now the West finds itself challenged from the outside by militant, atavistic force driven by hatred of all Western political thought, harkening back to age old grievances against Christendom. . . . Much of the Islamic world is rent by social divisions, frustrated by its material inferiority to the West, bitter at Western cultural influences, and driven by its resentments. (qtd in Said *Covering Islam* xvii)

Such and other writings on Islam and its relation to the Western world by writers like Daniel Pipes, Francis Fukuyama, Judith Miller, Bernard Lewis and V. S. Naipaul (which will be discussed later) are full of sweeping generalizations and clichés about “inferiority” of Islam and “superiority” of West. There is no mention of centuries of European colonization of Muslim lands. French occupation of Algeria, Zionist colonization of Palestine, and American military interventions, according to such a worldview, are not the causes of Muslim “resentments” and “rage”; rather their “material inferiority” makes them jealous of Western civilization, and therefore, they hate “us”. In such a late twentieth century narrative about Islam Muslims are said to be “frustrated” about the progress and

development of “our universal civilization”. This is what Mahmood Mamdani calls a typical Culture Talk, an interpretation of historical events that disregards diverse social, economic, political forces and explains everything in terms of a transhistorical category called ‘culture’. This tendency to explain political violence in terms of culture gained much traction during and after the Cold War when “green peril” began to replace the “red peril” as Wests eternal enemy. As I argued in the Chapter II of this thesis, this politicization of culture found its most ardent supporters in Naipaul, Lewis and Huntington who developed their own versions of conflict paradigm. These views see total difference and antagonism between Islam and the West. Islam is considered as “other”, with very little or no similarities between itself and other cultures. The notion of “inferiority” of Islam and “superiority” of West forms the underlying assumption of such writings about Islam. Islam is seen as violent and aggressive, committed to barbaric reactions against non-Islam, whereas West is portrayed as civilized, reasonable, generous, efficient, and enlightened. While questioning such coercive categories which are used to talk about Islam and Orient, Said argues that the terms like “Islam”, “West” and “Orient” themselves are constituted entities, and that the “notion that there are geographical spaces with indigenous, radically “different” inhabitants who can be defined on the basis of some religion, culture, or racial essence proper to that geographical space is equally highly debatable idea” (Said, *Orientalism* 322).

The late twentieth century debates about Islam in the mainstream Western media and scholarship, with due exceptions, are marred by demonization and distortion of Islam. Islam is treated as a threat to the West, its culture and to its values. These Western concerns about the perceived Islamic rage against Western culture and values began in the late twentieth century with the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. This revolution overturned a staunch and strategically important ally of the West: the Shah of Iran. This perceived Islamic threat involves stereotypical representations of Muslims and Arabs. Those views are based on sweeping generalization that conflate Islam with controversial Muslim figures like

Ayatollah Khomeini, Osama bin Laden, Ayman Al Zehwari; and with militant Muslim groups like Al –Qaida, Taliban, Islamic State etc. It is during this period that terms like Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic terror and Islamic extremism became a common usage to refer to Islam in the Arab world. One can argue that the rise of overtly Islamic militancy in the last couple of decades has been one of the many components in the construction and portrayal of the negative image of Muslims, yet one cannot discount the persistence and influence of the old Orientalist clichés on the consciousness of the people. The Orientalist images that did the function of othering Muslims carried within themselves an undertone of threat and fear. Orientals are to be feared; and not to be trusted. According to Edward Said, “modern Orientalism already carried within itself the imprint of the great European fear of Islam, and this was aggravated by political challenges of the *entre-deux-guerres* (Said, Orientalism 254). Writing about Orientalism’s ability to change according to differing circumstances Said continues

My point is that the metamorphosis of a relatively innocuous philological subspecialty into a capacity for managing political movements, administering colonies, making nearly apocalyptic statements representing the White Man’s difficult civilizing mission - all this is something in work within a purportedly liberal culture, one full of concern for its vaunted norms of catholicity, plurality, and open-mindedness. (Said 254)

Orientalist ideas would continue to be expressed without any special change to the character of those images even when historical periods and situations would change. Those ideas about Islam and Muslims have a kind of self-perpetuating character. Whenever any event happens that seems to pit “Islam” against “West”, metropolitan pundits would resort to age old tropes to ‘explain’ the behavior of Muslims. For example, Daniel Pipes wrote during the first Gulf War in order to ‘explain’ to the Western audiences the inherently ‘radical’ nature of Islamic culture. In a piece titled “There are No Moderates: Dealing with

Fundamentalist Islam” Pipes equates fundamentalism with Islam, and that according to Pipes is the new “fascist” ideology which the “democratic West” has to defeat. He equates Islam with fascism that it is “closer in spirit to other such movements (communism, fascism) than to traditional religion”. These generalizations about Islam, a very diverse and heterogeneous culture, are very difficult to make about any other religious tradition. But, since it is Islam, anything goes. For Pipes, Islamic “fundamentalism” is violent, irrational, uncompromising, and it threatens the world and “our” civilization. In other words, what I argue is that after the collapse of the USSR Soviet communism yielded to Islamism as the West’s new nemesis. Writers like Fukuyama, Huntington, Naipaul, Lewis and others of their ilk manufactured a new global enemy. There was this sudden interest in defending or eulogizing Western civilization by many scholars such as Alan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*, 1987) and Jacques Barzun (*From Dawn to Decadence*, 2000), and this was in direct response to recent political events and the subsequent immigration of large number of Muslims to the Western world. For such writers the very presence of Islam is “threatening”. The concept of “enemy” gradually narrowed in on Islam. As I argued earlier, the most important regional factors contributing to the perception of Islam as the *bête noire* of the West were, according to Dabashi,

. . . the 1977-79 Islamic revolution in Iran, the formation of Hezbollah in the aftermath of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the emergence of Hamas in Palestine after the commencement of the First Intifada in 1987, and the emergence of Groupe Islamique Arme in Algeria after the country’s military government annulled the victory of the Islamic Salvation Front in the 1992 general elections. (Dabashi, *Brown Skin* 11).

In this context, my point is that the emergence of Islam, or what Orientalists like Lewis and Naipaul like to call “the revival of Islam”, as the nemesis of the West gave a new lease of life to old-fashioned Orientalism. The

typical tendency of this recalibrated Orientalism is: to glorify the Western civilization and to denigrate Islam and its culture. This is exactly what V. S. Naipaul did in his travelogues about Islam where he constructed the idea of “Our Universal Civilization”. This idea was later on given a fuller shape in the lecture to the Manhattan Institute. Naipaul preached thus:

This idea of the pursuit of happiness is at the heart of the attractiveness of the civilization to so many outside it or on its periphery. I find it marvelous to contemplate to what an extent, after two centuries, and after the terrible history of the earlier part of this century, the idea has come to a kind of fruition. It is an elastic idea; it fits all men. It implies a certain kind of society, a certain kind of awakened spirit. I don't imagine my father's parents would have been able to understand the idea. So much is contained in it: the idea of the individual, responsibility, choice, the life of the intellect, the idea of vocation and perfectibility and achievement. It is an immense human idea. It cannot be reduced to a fixed system. It cannot generate fanaticism. But it is known to exist; and because of that, other more rigid systems in the end blow away. (Naipaul, *The Writer* 517)

While creating an unbridgeable opposition between ‘our universal civilization’ and “philosophical shriek” of “closed systems of faith” like “Islam, Naipaul maintains that

The universal civilization has been a long time in the making. It wasn't always universal; it wasn't always as attractive as it is today. The expansion of Europe gave it for at least three centuries a racial taint, which still causes pain. In Trinidad, I grew up in the last days of that kind of racialism. And that, perhaps, has given me a greater appreciation of the immense changes that have taken place since the end of the war, the extraordinary attempt of this

civilization to accommodate the rest of the world, and all the currents of that world's thought. (Naipaul, *The Writer* 516)

'Our universal civilization', i.e., the Western civilization undergoes normal processes of historical development and moves from one higher stage of development to another. It is open. It is elastic; it moves and gives "the idea of happiness" to those who embrace it. It gives its adherents, like Naipaul, a sense of "vocation" and a kind of purpose in life. It awakens a spirit of "responsibility", "choice", and the "life of intellect". Since it undergoes natural movements of historical progress, it has come to a "kind of fruition", and because of that "other more rigid systems in the end blow away". Like Fukuyama, Naipaul in his own way declared "an end of history" because "other more rigid systems in the blow away".

There is no doubt that the "rigid system" Naipaul talks about is Islam about which he comes to this conclusion:

In the 100 years since that story, the wealth of the world has grown, power has grown, education has spread; the disturbance, the philosophical shriek, has been amplified. The division in the revolutionary editor's spirit and the renunciation of the fictional biologist—both contain a tribute unacknowledged, but all the more profound to the universal civilization. Simple charms alone cannot be acquired from it; other, difficult things come with it as well: ambition, endeavor, individuality. (Naipaul, *The Writer* 516)

As compared to West, Islam is static. It does not progress. It is rigid. Even when the rest of the world has moved ahead towards fruition, Islam is caught in the nineteenth century. Only the "philosophical shriek" has been amplified by Islam and its values. In other words, according to Naipaul only some kind of "fanaticism" of Islam and Muslims has increased. No luxury of progress for Muslims. They are forever stranded in desert. And that is why "they" hate "us".

For Naipaul West opens a life of intellect and mind. It gives to those who belong to it a sense of ethics and responsibility in life. It makes one aware of an individual personality based on intellect and reason. It frees one from irrational and “rigid” systems of thought. It changes one’s attitude to oneself and towards others. The citizens of “our universal civilization” enjoy and uninhibited freedom of thought and values. Contrary to this, Naipaul’s representation of Islam is based on age old prejudices and biases. He argues that

. . . I found myself among a colonized people who had been stripped by their faith of all that expanding intellectual life, all the varied life of the mind and senses, the expanding cultural and historical knowledge of the world that I had been growing into on the other side of the world. I was among other people whose identity was more or less contained in the faith. I was among people who wished to be pure. (Naipaul, *The Writer* 512)

The idea that Naipaul gives to his immediate listeners of this lecture, and by extension to the people of the Western world, is that “Islam” and the culture and values it produces are incompatible with the life of intellect and reason, which are believed to be the sole preserve of “our civilization”. “Islam” forces its adherents to close off their minds and senses to the rest of the world. It makes them blind to historical progress. It makes them oblivious of the natural phenomenon around them. Economic, political and historical events and ideas do not influence the behavior of Muslims and their society. It is their “faith” that solely determines their response and attitude to their own lives and to that of rest of the people of the world. These ideas and such unqualified generalizations about Islam, if made about any other religion and civilization, would be considered outright racist and not a “dispassionate” analysis of Islam and Muslim civilization. In order to ‘inform’, as a typical Orientalist, his Western audiences in the Manhattan Institute about the ‘pernicious’ and ‘corroding’ influences of Islam, Naipaul talks about Malaysian Muslims and what their “faith” has done to them:

In Malaysia, they were desperate to rid themselves of their past, desperate to cleanse their people of tribal or animist practices, all the subconscious life, freighted with the past, that links people to the earth on which they walk, all the rich folk life that awakened people elsewhere cultivate and dredge for its poetry. They wish, the more earnest of these Malay Muslims, to be nothing but their imported Arab faith; I got the impression that they would have liked, ideally, to make their minds and souls a blank, an emptiness, so that they could be nothing but their faith. Such effort; such self-imposed tyranny. No colonization could have been greater than this colonization by the faith. (Naipaul *The Writer and the World* 512)

As compared to the 'Western civilization', a civilization which opens one's mind to the history, science, intellectual thought, open-mindedness, toleration, and humane values, Islam, "the imported Arab faith", has robbed the Malaysians of their history, their power to think, their sense of tradition, their cultural life: in short, "Islam" ends the very being of a human being. In other words, Naipaul theorizes that "Islam" is irrational, anti-intellectual, anti-science, primitive, totalitarian, fascistic, and barbaric. In order to create this neat binary opposition between 'progressive' West and 'fundamentalist' Islam, Naipaul overlooks the tremendous havoc that colonialism caused in these Muslim regions. He completely remains silent about the ongoing imperial policies of the United States and the settler colonialism of Israel. Palestinians, Jordanians, Lebanese, Iraqis and other Arab victims of the US-Israel military aggressions are not even mentioned; simply because that would have undercut the liberal and democratic assumptions of the neat narrative of 'our universal civilization'. No mention is made of America's support to dictatorships around the Arab world. While analyzing such representations and images of Islam, propagated and perpetuated in the Western world by media and Orientalists during and after Iranian Revolution, Edward Said maintained that "such claims about Islam, most of the time, the Arabs, are

designed to obscure what it is that Israel and the United States, as “Islam’s” main opponents, have been doing.

Between them the two countries have bombed and invaded several Islamic countries (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Iraq), they have (in Israel’s case) occupied Arab-Islamic territory in four countries, and in the United States’ case are seen in the United Nations as openly supporting the military occupation of these territories . . . Israel . . . has wielded its power over United States Middle Eastern policy whereby the interests of four million Israelis totally overshadow the interests of two hundred million Arab Muslims. It is all this, and not Bernard Lewis’s quaint formulation that Muslims are enraged at Western “modernity”, that has created an understandable sense of Arab-Islamic grievance against powers who, like Israel and the United States, proclaim that they are liberal democracies but act against lesser peoples according to quite contradictory norms of self-interest and cruelty.... I am saying that much of what one reads and sees in the media about Islam represents the aggression as coming from Islam because that is what “Islam” is. Local and concrete circumstances are thus obliterated. In other words, covering Islam is a one-sided activity that obscures what “we” *do*, and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their very flawed nature *are*. (Said xxi-xxii)

Such biased representations of Islam and the cultures it produced continue to influence the people’s attitudes towards Muslims. And, as writers like Said have shown, they also are dominant in policy circles of the Western world.

In order to make his theory about “Islam’s” anti-intellectual and irrational tendencies seem more plausible to his Western citizens of “our universal civilization” Naipaul gives the example of a novel called *Foreigner* written by an Iranian woman named Nahid Rachlin. The novel deals with an Iranian woman

who works in Boston as a biologist. She is married to an American, and Naipaul informs his listeners that in Boston, a city of 'our universal civilization', the biologist "seems to be all right". But the moment she returns back to Iran and hence comes into contact with Islam, she "begins to feel lost". A touch with Islamic culture leads to loss of clarity. Naipaul infers from the behavior of the protagonist of the novel that

. . . we can see that the young woman was not prepared for the movement between civilizations, the movement out of the shut-in Iranian world, where the faith was the complete way, filled everything, left no spare corner of the mind or will or soul, to the other world, where it was necessary to be an individual and responsible; where people developed vocations, and were stirred by ambition and achievement, and believed in perfectibility. Once we understand or have an intimation of that, we see, with the central figure of the novel, what a torment and emptiness that automatic, imitative life in Boston has been for her. (Naipaul, *The Writer and the World* 515)

Apparently, the Iranian woman, a Muslim, was not prepared by her faith for the outside world. Islam "colonized" the mind and soul of its adherents to such an extent that it left no space for other experiences and ideas. It corroded one's sense of 'individuality' and 'responsibility'. Muslims become, Naipaul clearly suggests, neurotic because of the hold their "faith" has on them. They cannot negotiate with the rest of the world. On the other hand, Boston stirs "ambition and achievement" and belief in "perfectibility". Iranian protagonist stands for Muslims and Boston stands for "our universal civilization". Belief system of Islam is clearly pitted against the West in an unequal power relation. The whole argument hinges on the assumption of the superiority of Western culture and way of life, and inferiority of Islam and the civilization it gave rise to.

It is very pertinent here to note that Naipaul's hostile attitude towards Islam and Muslims has roots in his upbringing in a Brahmin family of Trinidad. As Paul Theroux wrote in *Newsweek* about Naipaul that "he's proud dignified . . . the embodiment of all those things is being a Brahmin. You must never forget that he is a Brahmin" (qtd in French 396). This upbringing and education shaped his response to Islam. For example, at the time of Iranian Revolution against the Shah Naipaul's sister Kamal wrote to him: "what with all the back to Islam movement and the Ayatollah, I have gone back to the old thinking of my family. You know, I had got rid of that deeply ingrained distrust of the Muslims but now it's all come back" (qtd in French 396). His family had very rigid and biased ideas about Islam. They did not like Islam and Muslim culture. His brother Shiva had said, "my mother has always found it hard to forgive the Muslims for their numerous invasions of India and for forcing the partition of the subcontinent" (28). Like his mother, his father also distrusted Muslims: "If a fellow is a decent Indian, it doesn't matter if he is a Christian; but he should never be a Mohammedan" (qtd in French 110). In this context Patrick French writes in his biography of V. S. Naipaul that "Vidia's instinctive Indian, or Hindu, exclusivity, which had in the past been expressed more through comedy than enmity, changed gear. It was an irreversible shift; like Trinidad itself, V. S. Naipaul went through a hardening of racial attitudes in 1956" (French 170). French also writes that "his attitudes and outlook had been formed by his family background, his colonial education and his experiences in Britain and beyond in the 1950s and 1960s: his instincts and prejudices were intact, but his eyes were wide open, missing nothing" (279). His attitudes towards Islam had already been shaped even before he visited the four Muslim countries. His mental horizons of expectation had prepared him beforehand for "rage" and "parasitism" that he 'saw' Muslims suffering from. Having "shed all these colonial political concerns" in 1978 after he joined "civilization" in England (French 213), Naipaul's objective became to inform the Western people about the "universal" nature of their civilization and, at the same time, to warn them about the "revival of Islam". The underlying assumption of this attitude is that the "Islam" represents a threat to the "open" and "tolerant"

civilization of the West. It automatically associates emotions of fear, suspicion and menace with Islam and its adherents. This background, I argue, is very relevant when one has to make sense of Naipaul's racist and stereotypical representation of Islam and Muslims.

Naipaul's whole arguments and generalizations regarding Islam rest on the notion of innate inferiority of Islam as compared to Christian West. West gives an "idea of the pursuit of happiness . . . an idea of pursuit of happiness is at the heart of the attractiveness of the civilization to so many outside it or on its periphery" (Naipaul *The Writer and the World* 517), while, on the other hand, "no colonization had been so thorough as the colonization that had come with the Arab faith. Colonized and defeated peoples can begin to distrust themselves" (Naipaul *The Writer and the World* 513). West gives a sense of self and Islam creates a distrust of self. Not only is Islam inimical to the sense of self, it also impairs one's sense of past history. It wages a 'war' against pre-Islamic past. In Muslim countries "the rage is against the past, the history, and the impossible dream is one of true faith, growing out of a spiritual vacancy" (Naipaul *Beyond Belief* 52). Naipaul seems to have an obsession with pre-Islamic past of these Muslim countries. For him anything is better than "Islam". The idea of Islam as the most debilitating form of "imperialism" is, therefore, reiterated again and again throughout his writings on Islam: "there probably has been no imperialism like that of Islam and the Arabs. The Gauls, after five hundred years of Roman rule, could recover their old gods and reverences; those beliefs had not died, they lay just below the Roman surface. But Islam seeks as an article of faith to erase the past; the believers in the end honor Arabia alone; they have nothing to return to" (331). Christianity, on the other hand, did not "mean a break with the past" (81). At another place in *Beyond Belief* Naipaul states that "Converted people have to strip themselves of their past; of converted peoples nothing is required but the purest faith (if such a thing can be arrived at), Islam, submission, is the most uncompromising kind of imperialism (64). Such characterization of Islam as an uncompromising form of "imperialism", a faith that "erases past", is highly

ideological and motivated, especially when one considers the historical context within which Naipaul formulated these ideas about “the colonization of Islam”. The irony is that this was the same period, as I have shown, when American empire and Israeli settler colonialism were attacking one Muslim country after another. Naipaul leaves no room for individual choice and freedom of conscience for Muslims. He does not consider the implications of the possibility that the “converted” people may be more than happy with their faith. This new faith may have given them spiritual framework on the basis of which they could make sense of the world and their relationship with the nature. It is apparent from Naipaul’s arguments that he would actually like Muslims to go back to their pre-Islamic roots and shun their new faith. This attitude reflects the “Islamoclasm that has taken hold of the public sphere in North America and Europe, which lays out broad, unquestioning certainties about the nature and history of Islam. Certainties that are as dogmatic as the supposed dogmas that they set out to oppose. The critique-by-media of Islam claims to defend certain ‘core Western values’, which are founded on the principles of the Enlightenment and assumed to lie at the base of all civilized discourse” (Hoskote and Trojanow, *Confluences* 183). Such images are meant to excite the Western audiences and ‘inform’ them about what sinister things are going on ‘there’. While analyzing such descriptions of Islam which flooded market in the wake of Iranian Revolution, Edward Said stated that

. . . the market for representations of a monolithic, enraged, threatening, and conspiratorially spreading Islam is much greater, more useful, and capable of generating more excitement, whether for purposes of entertainment or of mobilizing passions against a new foreign devil. For every unusual book like Richard Bulliet’s *Islam: The View from the Edge* . . . there are many more books and articles expressing views . . . in which Islam, terrorism, the Palestinians are routinely harangued together, these tend to be what passes for informed analysis and coverage in the United States’ prestige media. The daily reader of the mainstream media is most

unlikely to encounter, for instance, Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad's careful analysis of "Islamist perceptions of US Policy in the Near East" . . . She carefully distinguishes among five different kinds of Islamists (preferring the use of that word instead of the inflammatory "radical" or "fundamentalist") and even more useful, collects a whole series of real incitements to Muslims that have exacerbated relationships between the world of Islam and the West. Among them are statements by Ben-Gurion ("We fear nothing but Islam"), Yitzhak Rabin ("The religion of Islam is our only enemy"), and Shimon Peres, (We will not feel secure until Islam puts away its sword"), and the long list of direct Western actions against the Islamic world that culminate in the strong, not to say aggressive, Israel-United States partnership. (Said *Covering Islam* xxviii)

Most of these post-Iranian Revolution images of Islam heightened the sense of insecurity and perpetuated the monolithic and hostile representations. They, like Naipaul's dispatches from Muslim lands, elevated representations of Islam to the level of objective truth. Edward Said's arguments in *Covering Islam* regarding the simplistic and essentialist binaries between "Islam" and "West" created by mainstream Western scholarship are apt to describe Naipaul's activities of image creation. Said maintains that:

Why the slavish and uncritical adoption of views that stress the unvaryingly reductive arguments about Islam, and why the extraordinary willingness to accept the official rhetoric emanating from the governments in its irresponsible characterizations of Islam: by that I mean the loose application of the word "terrorism" to "Islam", and the attitude that elevates Israeli views of Islam's "danger" to the level of United States policy?

The answer is in how prevalent age-old views of Islam as an acceptable competitor to the Christian West still are. . . . The tendency to consider the whole world as one country's *imperium* is very much in the ascendency in today's United States, the last remaining super power. But whereas most other great cultural groupings appear to have accepted the United States' role, it is only from within the Islamic world that signs of determined resistance are still strong. Therefore we have an efflorescence of cultural and religious attack on Islam from individuals and groups whose interests are informed with the idea of the West (and the United States, as its leader) as a standard for enlightened modernity. Yet far from being an accurate description of "the West", such an idea of rightful Western dominance is in reality an uncritical idolization of Western *power*. (Said *Covering Islam* xxix, italics in original)

Similarly, Hoskote and Trojanow critique the negative and stereotypical images of Islam that have flooded the Western culture during the second half of twentieth century. Their critical intervention unmasks the current rhetoric of the West in relation to Islam. They argue that this rhetoric "falls victim to the mystification, closure and lack of nuance that it challenges in the other" (Hoskote and Trojanow 184). They point out that in the West Islam is generally

. . . viewed as a regressive, intolerant religion that demands submission of its followers and commands violence against those who do not follow it. The general image is of a faith that is backward-looking and self-denyingly austere; that swaddles its women in bulky robes when it isn't killing them for defying the family patriarch in matters of love, sex and marriage. . . . The Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipaul and others have popularised the idea that contact with Islam has been catastrophic for other cultures – that Islam has wiped out all signs of the cultures it has supplanted,

that Islam is an unfinished project that is only waiting for an opportunity for world domination. This is no more than a projection of the aims and methods of European colonialism. We have only to recall that, after the centuries of Islamic political dominance, Muslims in India remain a minority and Hinduism flourishes. We have only to point to the beautifully sculpted stone Ganeshas and Garudas that abound in Muslim-majority Indonesia, not to mention the mellifluous Sanskrit names that Indonesia's Muslims bear: Meghawati, Sudarsano, Sukarno, all laden with Hindu mythic associations. And the Buddhist temple-complex of Borobudur stands in splendor, damaged by an earthquake but still a symbol of national pride. (186)

Cultural Talk and Islam: Naipaul's "rage" over "revival"

In the previous section of this chapter I have argued that V. S. Naipaul constructed the binary opposition between essentialized "Islam" and "West" at a time of intense political unrest between Muslim nations and the US-Israel colonial policies in the Middle East. His representation of Islam as an uncompromising form of "imperialism" and "colonization" is a projection of aims and methods of US colonialism and imperial relations that were accruing during the last few decades of twentieth century. I argued that Naipaul, like Lewis and Huntington, used old Orientalist clichés to portray Islam as a threat to the balance not only of its adherents but also of the Western civilization. As a new Orientalist, Naipaul performed the task of 'informing' the West about culture of Islam so that it would be easy for the Westerners to 'understand' and, then, to control the Muslim lands. As a body of knowledge, Naipaul's descriptions of Muslim world form a part of late twentieth century Orientalism that sought to deal with it "by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, Orientalism 3). This

ideological formation of the concept of “our universal civilization” in opposition to the “parasitism” of Muslims and Islam is complemented by Naipaul’s analysis of what he calls “revival of Islam”, i.e, Islamic form of fundamentalism. This is also related to and forms a part of the clash of civilizations thesis, which has been discussed in Chapter II. In this section of this chapter I argue that, given the historical moment of conflict between US imperialism and some Muslim countries, Naipaul’s insistence on the “revival of Islam” as antagonistic to Western world is faulty, and it serves the ideological function of imperial discourse designed to justify Euro-American military interventions in the Middle East. While arguing this I do not deny the rise and existence of overtly militant Islamist organizations which have resorted to violence in the world, particularly in Islamic world itself. What I am questioning is Naipaul’s insistence on Islamic faith as the sole cause of “the rage of Islam”. My point is that Naipaul overlooks more important political, economic, and imperial reasons behind the growth of fundamentalism within some of the Muslim communities. He is silent about the late twentieth century imperial formations and military interventions of US Empire as a possible cause of this hardening of religious identities. This persistent rhetoric about “Islamic fundamentalism” ends by equating the religion of more than a billion people with ‘terrorism’, ‘anti-intellectualism’, ‘parasitism’, ‘neurosis’, and violence. I critique this kind of cultural determinism by highlighting what Naipaul has left unsaid, because in ideological formations what is left unsaid is sometimes more important than what is said. His ideological tactic is to suppress a significant amount of other historical experiences between Islam and West. In such a context and at this juncture of history, Naipaul’s interest in Islam is not purely incidental, but, rather deeply embedded in ideological struggles at the end of the Cold War. As Said has suggested about Bernard Lewis, and I argue is equally applicable to V. S. Naipaul,

European interest in Islam derived not from curiosity but from fear of a monotheistic, culturally, and militarily formidable competitor to Christianity. The earliest European scholars of Islam, as

numerous historians have shown, were medieval polemicists writing to ward off the threat of Muslim hordes and apostasy. In one way or another that combination of fear and hostility has persisted to the present day, both in scholarly and non-scholarly attention to an Islam which is viewed as belonging to a part of the world – the Orient – counterposed imaginatively, geographically, and historically against Europe and the West. (Said *Orientalism* 344)

V. S. Naipaul began to formulate his ideas about “the revival of Islam” almost exactly at the time of Iranian revolution in 1979. After this and during his travels through four Muslim countries he gave his thesis about “rage of Islam” a shape and structure, and connected it with his other idea of Muslim “parasitism” and “neurosis”. This thesis received its final form in his lecture “Our Universal Civilization”, given at the time of first Gulf War; one of the consequences of this war was the death of nearly five lakh children in Iraq. Naipaul makes many diverse comments about the nature and world view of “Islamic fundamentalism”. He found ‘fundamentalism’ a growing threat in these countries, and recounted the ‘nihilistic’ influences on social, political, cultural, economic, and intellectual aspects of life. While providing an analysis of “Islamic fundamentalism”, as writer like Said, Tariq Ali, Dabashi, and Purabi Pawar has stated, Naipaul “erases the difference between Islam and Islamic fundamentalism, and uses them as interchangeable terms which they are not” (Pawar: 17) . According to Naipaul, Islam is not “a philosophical or speculative religion”. Rather it has been “imperialism” from its very inception in the Arabian desert (Naipaul 7 Among). It was less “metaphysical and more direct” and “it had generated nothing like a Renaissance. Muslim countries, where not colonized, were despotisms; nearly all, before oil, were poor” (12). In other words, Muslims suffer this ill fate of not controlling themselves properly. Without ‘colonization’ by the West they will always remain “despotisms”. They like “despotism”. Muslims have not given rise to inquiry and knowledge like the Westerners did during the Renaissance. This

stereotypical and biased understanding of Islamic intellectual history has been thoroughly dismissed by recent revisionist scholarship of Islam. Historians of Islamic influence on the making of “European” Renaissance have been arguing for long now that this upsurge on free and rational inquiry would not have been possible with the deep philosophical and ethical influences of Arabs and Muslim Spain. Refuting such broad claims and generalizations, as made by writers like Naipaul, about the static and passive nature of Islamic intellectual tradition, revisionist historians maintain that this denial of Islamic contribution has been a typical trend in mainstream Western intellectual history. It is in this context that Hoskote and Trojanow have argued that

Unwilling to the perceived adversary more of a due than absolutely necessary, European historical accounts usually reduce these Islamic accomplishments to the safeguarding and forwarding of “our” treasures. This smug belief overlooks the fact that the savage in the bogs of Middle England was far removed from the supposed heritage of classical antiquity, both in space and sophistication, while the trader in the Baghdad souk was a neighbor to Hellas. ‘The Arab, almost as much as the Byzantine, was an heir of Graeco-Roman civilization. His way of life was not very different. A Byzantine felt far more at home in Cairo or Baghdad than he would feel at Paris or Goslar, or even at Rome’ (Ruciman 1951, Vol. 1:75). Early Islamic civilization was not a cold storage for perishables that could not be entrusted to the illiterate barbarians who were then rampaging across Europe, but a factory humming with a variety of technologies and cultural developments. Amongst the many factories that were active – Baghdad, Damascus, Alexandria – none were more impressive and beautifully enduring than the cities of al-Andalus. (Hoskote and Trojanow 46)

Commenting on Dante's silence about his Islamic influences as precursors of the *Commedia*, these authors highlight the European tendency of not giving due credit to Islamic sources of their late Renaissance achievements. They further point out:

This attitude prevails in Europe until today, an obsession with a pure origin, as if the fact of the outside influences would contaminate one's own identity and diminish one's greatness. In our minds, exactly the opposite is true. The achievement of a colossal figure like Dante is that he was receptive to pre-existing ideas, and that he had the energy and the vision to form an individual masterpiece in the spirit of confluence. Unfortunately, the denial and erasure of Muslim precursors was about to become a common editorial manoeuvre in theology, literature and science. (68)

This erasure of history is too common a practice in Naipaul that he totally erases the contemporary Euro-American and Israeli settler colonial policies and their impact on Middle East Muslims from his thoughts about the rise of "Islamic fundamentalism". According to him Islamic faith is the main and sole reason behind all the ills of Muslim societies. Political, social, economic, and cultural conflicts are said to be the result of "Islam". The main trouble with Naipaul's understanding of "Islamic fundamentalism" is that he fails to make a subtle distinction between militant Islamism, a modern political ideology, and Islam, a religious belief system of almost a billion people. Islamic societies are so diverse and varied that only ideologically committed demagogues can talk in terms of a homogenized form of "Islam" and "Muslim".

In *Among the Believers* one section is titled "The Disorder of the Law" in which Naipaul sums up his comparison between "Islam", "Islamic fundamentalism" and "West" or "Universal Civilization". The "Law" of the title refers to Islamic Law, and its association with "disorder" makes it clear to the Western readership that "Islam" causes disorder. Therefore, "disorder" is what

Naipaul finds in the four Muslim countries he visited at the time of Iranian Revolution. The underlying ideological assumption is that whatever “we” are doing in “that” part of the world is perfectly normal and justified. “Universal civilization”, which is open, tolerant, and rational, cannot cause any “disorder” the way the “uncompromising imperialism” called Islam does. As a typical Orientalist, Naipaul characterizes the anti-imperial political movements of Muslims as merely a “part of their rage against the civilization that encircles them and which they as a community despair of mastering” (Naipaul *Among the Believers* 167). According to Naipaul

The Islam that was coming to the villages - brushed with new and borrowed ideas about the wickedness of the machine, the misuse of foreign aid – was the Islam that in the late twentieth century had rediscovered its political roots . . . this late twentieth century Islam appeared to raise political issues. But it had the flaw of its origins – the flaw that ran right through Islamic history: to the political issues it raised it offered no political or practical solution. It offered only the faith. It offered only the Prophet, who would settle everything – but who had ceased to exist. This political Islam was rage, anarchy. (Naipaul *Among the Believers* 355)

All the political movements from Algeria to Pakistan are not legitimate political movements; they are only “rage” at the modern Western civilization and its achievements. Naipaul seems to suggest that Muslims are too primitive to organize modern political movements based on ideas of freedom, equality and individual dignity. ‘They’ cannot formulate their political mobilization around issues of justice and equality. Their resistance to US imperial policies and Israeli settler colonialism is demonized as “rage against the civilization”. Muslims are unable to cope up with the “tolerant” and “liberal” Western world, which encircles them, therefore their only response is either “despair” or “rage”. Or even “neurosis.

According to Naipaul “neurosis” is another result of “Islam” and “Islamic fundamentalism”. In the “Prologue” to the *Beyond Belief* Naipaul sums up his reactions to Islam thus:

Islam is in its origins an Arab religion. Everyone not an Arab who is a Muslim is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert’s worldview alters. His holy places are in Arab lands; his sacred language is Arabic. His idea of history of alters. He rejects his own. He becomes, whether he likes it or not, a part of the Arab history. The convert has to turn away from everything that is his. The disturbance for societies is immense, and even after a thousand years can remain unresolved; the turning away has to be done again and again. People develop fantasies about who and what they are; and in the Islam of converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries can be easily set on the boil. (Naipaul *Beyond Belief* xi).

This in any other would have been considered outright racism. According to Naipaul, neurosis, a tendency towards nihilism, aggressive attitude towards the rest of the world, characterize Muslim behavior, and this has been caused by their “conversion” to Islam, an Arab faith. About Pakistan Naipaul writes:

The local people would hardly be there, in their own land, or would be there only as ciphers swept aside by the agents of faith. It is a dreadful mangling of history. It is a convert’s view; that is all that can be said for it. History has become a kind of neurosis. Too much has to be ignored or angled; there is too much fantasy. This fantasy isn’t in the books alone; it affects people’s lives. (329)

This theme of “neurosis” caused by a conversion to “Islam” is, as is apparent from above, a constant theme of Naipaul’ Islamic excursions. In other

words, Naipaul insinuates to his Western audiences that Islam is a disease-causing faith. It ends one's emotional and intellectual balance. Islam is found guilty of inducing mental illness on a cultural scale because it is an "Arab" religion with sacred lands in Arabia. It creates pessimism and nihilism. Its adherents lose any sense of purpose. They become spiritually incapacitated. They become unable to make any difference between reality and "fantasy". Rather "fantasy" takes the place of reality for them. Unable to cope up with the changing world, its intellectual and scientific revolutions, 'Muslims' shut themselves in a cocoon of their own past. All these are outcome, according to Naipaul, of "conversion" Muslims have to go through. Commenting on Naipaul's "neurosis" thesis O'Shea Meddour argues that

According to this peculiar thesis, Arabs do not suffer from neurosis because they are not "converts". Naipaul fails to mention that Arabs were generally polytheistic at the time of Prophet Muhammad and, in order to become Muslims, necessarily "converted". Perhaps he dismisses this factor because he believes that the "sacred places" of Arabs are "in their own lands"? Assuming that this is Naipaul's reasoning, it would follow that European and American Christians and Jews suffer from a similar "neurosis" because their "sacred places" are abroad. However, it is clear that Naipaul regards western Christians and Jews as mentally sound. The logic behind his argument is impossible to follow. (Meddour 68)

Referring to Naipaul's "neurosis" thesis about Islam, Eqbal Ahmad asks in an interview, "Distorted Histories: An Interview with Eqbal Ahmad":

Who is not a convert? By Naipaul's definition, it Iranians are converted Muslims, the Americans are converted Christians, the Japanese are converted Buddhists, and the Chinese, large numbers of them, are converted Buddhists as well. Everybody is converted

because at beginning every religion had only a few followers. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, all prophetic religions developed through conversion. In that sense, his organizing thesis should not exclude anyone. (Ahmad 129)

Eqbal Ahmad contests Naipaul's obsession with "Islamic fundamentalism" in Muslim societies and argues that in order to provide a neat Orientalist picture of Islam, Naipaul overlooks other elements of these societies. For example, in case of Pakistan Naipaul gives his readers an impression that Pakistan is an Islamic state, run by a military dictator and supported by its people. Naipaul's 'objective' reporting completely ignored that "the regime was being opposed at great risk to themselves by hundreds of thousands of people, including almost all the known poets, writers and artists of Pakistan. Our best writers of that time were in prison or in exile. . . . and you don't make one mention of it. . . . this Islam that you are presenting is not the final Islam of Muslims" (Ahmad *Confronting Empire* 129).

As has been amply demonstrated in the previous and in this chapter, Naipaul's construction of the idea of "Islamic revival" and "rage" is purely a one-sided ideological construct. Like typical Orientalist scholars Naipaul portrays Islam at war with itself and with the rest of the world. It is shown to be obscurantist and backward looking. Its experiences with the colonial rule of Europe and America have only given rise to "rage and anarchy". Muslim intellectual and political anti-colonial movements are portrayed as a mere "distress" and hatred of "Western" modernity. The fact that these movements, collectively called political Islam or Islamism, emerged during and in response to experiences of colonialism is not given due credit while formulating their ideas and structures. On the contrary, Islam is portrayed as a single monolithic entity, conflating militant Muslim movements with mainstream Islam. This kind of scholarship views Islam as the new enemy and threat. I have argued that this particular attitude towards Islam is necessary for the West, both to reassert its

imperial authority over the Muslim world and, at the same time, to construct and affirm its own image. Consequently, Western Orientalist writers tend to demonize Islam by portraying it as a threat to Western civilization and to the liberal values of the modern world. Like other Orientalists, Naipaul too claims explicitly and implicitly that “Islamic fundamentalism” represents a genuine future threat to the ‘civilized’ modern world and the “new World”. Like Bernard Lewis, Naipaul too has portrayed “Islam” as a rejection of modernity. This discourse attributes the rise of “Islamic rage” to Islam’s specificity, rather than to the social, economic, cultural and political dynamics of the contemporary world. This kind of argument looks at Islam as having ‘inherent’ and transhistorical features that that reinforces the differences between the Islam and the West. These characteristics, we are made to believe, produced “revival of Islam”, which renders Islam incompatible with modernism. This trend, according to Elzian Elgamri, in “contemporary scholarship may be considered a continuation of the old Orientalist tradition, hence the terms Neo-Orientalism and Neo-Orientalist. This discourse also emphasizes the continuing existence of the potential confrontation with Islamic resurgence, given the long history of the potential confrontation with the civilization of the West” (Elgamri 42). This approach emphasizes various perceived differences between the “West” and “Islam”, and assumes an inevitable ‘clash of civilizations’ as formulated by Lewis and Samuel Huntington. While critiquing the reductive representations of Islam in mainstream media and scholarship, Elgamri maintains that

The relationship between Islam and the West is deeply involved in the discourse used by contemporary scholarship in viewing, reviewing, interpreting and representing Islamic fundamentalism.

One common factor between Orientalist discourses and the discourses of contemporary scholarship is the tendency to emphasize the difference between the West and the world of Islam.

Conflation is another common characteristic shared by the discourses of the Orientalist tradition and the discourses of those

who view Islamic societies as monolithic and look at the Islamic fundamentalism as a manifestation of assumed inherent characteristics that arguably make Islam incapable of change and adaptation to certain aspects of the Western liberal ideology. (Elgamri 43)

Against this culturally deterministic interpretation of the relationship between West and Islam, I argue that the rise of Islamism as a political ideology in the last decades of twentieth century can be best explained by reference to a combination of socio-economic and political factors. Most important factor of all is the US-Israel colonial and imperial adventures in the Muslim world. Military interventions, Cold War politics, and unequal power relations that accrued as a result of colonialism cannot be sidelined as major factors in the rise of Islamist political ideologies and parties. As Hamid Dabashi has stated that “the emerging global reconfiguration of power has no use for that outdated binary, but plenty of room for the globalized empire and manners of revolutionary resistance to it. This is not a war between “Islam and the West” any more. We are at the threshold of a whole new reconfiguration of power and politics, empire building, and moral and normative resistance to it. (Dabashi *Islamic Liberation Theology 2*). The new empire-building and the disproportionate balance of power enable the US to exercise a tremendous influence over Muslim countries. In other words, the centrality of unequal power relationships cannot be avoided while giving any account of “the revival of Islam”.

This interpretation and analysis of “Islamic fundamentalism” and “rage” as is provided by V.S. Naipaul considers “Islam” as the primary cause. This lays too much emphasis on culture as the determining factor. It borders on a kind of cultural determinism. This kind of determinism assumes that every culture has a tangible and transhistorical essence that defines it, and it then can explain politics as a consequence of that essence. Therefore, “Islamic fundamentalism” is offered as both description and explanation of any standoff between Muslim countries and

Euro-American imperialism. It is not capitalism, colonialism, state formation and neoimperial reconfigurations, but some religious essence (culture) that is said to be “the dividing line between those in favor of a peaceful, civic existence and those inclined to terror. It is said that our world is divided between those who are modern and those who are premodern. The moderns make culture and are its masters; the premoderns are said to be but conduits” (Mamdani 18). It is these explanations of the “revival of Islam”, thought of as ‘rage’, ‘neurosis’, and ‘threat’, which Mahmood Mamdani calls Culture Talk. Samir Amin defines this kind of culturalism as “an apparently coherent and holistic theory based on the hypothesis that there are cultural invariants able to persist through and beyond possible transformations in economic, social and political systems” (Amin 7). This culturalist argument is an affirmation of irreducible unique traits of culture or faith that are said to determine the course of history of civilizations. Amin argues that this culturalism is a kind of Eurocentrism characterized by an “inability to see anything other than the lives of those who are comfortably installed in the modern world. Modern culture claims to be founded on humanist universalism. In fact, in its Eurocentric vision, it negates any such universalism. Eurocentrism has brought with it the destruction of peoples and civilizations that have resisted its spread” (Amin 185). However, it is pertinent here to mention that this cultural determinism, or Culture Talk, did not originate from V. S. Naipaul first. Rather its more durable version has been provided by Bernard Lewis, a senior British Orientalist. Put together, they form a perfect contemporary version of nineteenth century colonial discourse.

Lewis’ and Naipaul’s views are utterly conventional in their derivation from nineteenth century Orientalists of the British school. Both see in Islam a danger to Christianity and liberal values. Both provide cultural (religious) explanations of what Naipaul calls Islam’s “rage”. Both use the words “rage” and “revolt” in referring to Muslim responses to colonialism and neoimperialism. Like Naipaul, Lewis claims that

There is something in the religious culture of Islam which inspired, in even the humblest peasant or peddler, a dignity and a courtesy toward others never exceeded and rarely equaled in other civilizations. And yet in moments of upheaval and disruption, when the deeper passions are stirred, this dignity and courtesy towards others can give way to an explosive mixture of rage and hatred . . . (Lewis 59)

As I pointed out earlier, Lewis and Naipaul make huge cultural points about an entire civilization of Islam. They show a complete inability to grant to Muslims right to their own cultural practices, political and historical experiences by denying any agency to them. Naipaul and Lewis make a calculated attempt to show that because Muslims are not part of “our universal civilization” they cannot be tolerant, intellectual, rational, and unbiased. These are meant to be exclusive qualities of Western civilization. Natural processes of human life are denied to them. Their “faith” is said to have a total hold on them, and therefore, “faith” is the all-encompassing explanatory category on which “West” can rely to understand the “rage” and “revival of Islam”. Commenting on Lewis, which equally applies to Naipaul also, Said states that “Lewis simply cannot deal with the diversity of Muslim, much less human, life because it is closed to him as something foreign, radically different, and other” (Said *Covering Islam* xxxi). Naipaul’s lecture “Our Universal Civilization” and Lewis’ articles like “The Roots of Muslim Rage” and “The Return of Islam”, which was later published as a chapter in *Islam and the West*, allege that most of the major nineteenth and twentieth century Muslim political and anti-colonial movements that they disapprove of are actually throwbacks to seventh-century Islam. For both of them there exists a fundamental, even ontological, difference between “Muslims” and the “modern West”. Islam and Muslim world, according to them, has not changed over the course of history. This disallows the possibility of historical change and human agency to Muslims of diverse cultures; instead, it lumps them all together as a monolithic entity. For example, in order to give credence to his “diagnosis” of

“rage of Islam” and in order to say that this “rage” among Muslims is not something new, but a part of their “faith”, Naipaul connects himself with Joseph Conrad who, Naipaul tells us, “was able at a time of high imperialism to go far beyond the imperialistic, surface ways of writing about the East and native peoples . . . (Conrad published a book) in 1896, nearly 100 years ago, in which he catches something of the Muslim hysteria of that time – the hysteria that, a hundred years later, with greater education and wealth of the native peoples, and the withdrawing of empires, was to turn into the fundamentalism we hear about” (Naipaul *The Writer and the World* 513). Naipaul seems to point out to his audiences that Muslims are doomed to “hysteria” and irrationalism as “we” are to the enjoyment of our secular, rational, and civilizational superiority. The point Naipaul suggests to his Western audiences is that the Muslim “hysteria” now in the late twentieth century is not something new; rather ‘they’ have not changed even within a century. ‘Natives’ are natives; their anti-colonial movements are merely “hysteria”, a kind of a mental disorder. This “hysteria” is elsewhere called “neurosis” and “rage”. It increases with the “withdrawing of empires” and “with greater education and wealth of the natives”. In other words, Naipaul argues that the education which in other peoples brings intellectual and rational understanding of the world, in Muslims it only leads to a confusion of reality and fantasy. The underlying assumption is colored with imperial nostalgia and longing for the return for the old empires. West would do good to Muslims if it colonizes them again because in the absence of imperialism and with “withdrawing of empires” the “hysteria” of Muslims has only increased. Therefore, if Muslims are “revolting” today it is because it is historically determined that they should do so. Naipaul seems to suggest that “What they react to are not policies or actions, or anything so mundane as that. What they are fighting on behalf of is an irrational hatred of the secular present which . . . is “ours” and ours alone” (Said *Covering Islam* xxxiii).

In this chapter I have argued that using “Islam” as a monolithic cultural category to account for, as Naipaul does, the rise of different political Islamist

movements is an ideological gesture that is designed to justify and perpetuate the neoimperial policies of late twentieth century US empire. I have maintained that Naipaul's characterization of anti-colonial movements in the Muslim world as "hysteria", "neurosis" and "rage" are based on the old Orientalist ideas of inherent superiority of the "West" as compared to the Muslim Orient. This association of Islam with some kind of a mental disorder and anxiety creates an atmosphere of threat among the Western people and provides "legitimate" reasons for future military interventions in Muslim countries. In other words, I argue that Naipaul's writings on Islam, along with that of Lewis and Huntington, help to create late twentieth century versions of nineteenth century colonial discourse based on Orientalist categories that posit an ontological and epistemological difference between "rational" West and "hysterical" Islam.

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Chapter IV

Naipaul and India's Islamic History: An Assessment

In the previous chapters of this thesis a critique has been made in relation to Naipaul's writings on Islam and his concept of "the rage Islam". Following colonial and critical discourse theory I have argued that in the political atmosphere of the late twentieth century Naipaul's depiction of "Islam" as antagonistic to the Western civilization has functioned as a contemporary version of the nineteenth century colonial discourse which was informed by the Orientalist clichés and ideas about Islam and Muslims in particular and Arabs in general. Those Orientalist images, as Said has shown in *Orientalism*, were a part of the cultural forms, and also informed the imperial and neoimperial policies of the Euro-American colonial powers. I have maintained that during the second half of the twentieth century certain very important political conflicts between US-Israeli imperial actions and some Muslim countries brought the old Orientalist images, ideas, stereotypes and rhetoric back to the general cultural discourse about Muslims in the Western world. Media commentators and mainstream 'experts' on Islam began to explain "the Muslim and Arab mind" to the Western audiences and readership. Orientalists like Bernard Lewis the theories of "rage", "revolt", and "return" of Islam. They portrayed the resistance movements of Muslims, which drew on Islam as a source of revolutionary ideology, as "Islamic fundamentalism" and claimed a "Clash of civilization" involving "open" and "rational" West on one side and "closed" and "primitive" Islam on the other side of the divide. I have argued in the previous chapters that Naipaul too contributed to this demonization of Islam by his own theses of "rage" and "revival" of Islam. His nonfiction writings and Islamic travelogues helped give new steam to the old Orientalist dichotomy between "progressive" West and "primitive" Islam. His concept of "our universal civilization" excluded Islam from it; instead, it associated ideas like "neurosis", "rage", and "parasitism" with Muslims and their faith. My theoretical intervention has been that in order to better appreciate Naipaul's Islamic

travelogues we cannot discount the overarching neoimperial and settler colonialism which has shaped and circumscribed the debates around Islam and Muslims. In order to do that I have situated Naipaul 'excursions among converted peoples' within the late twentieth century historical and political juncture characterized by neoimperial reconfiguration which is headed by the only world super power, US.

This chapter will focus on V. S. Naipaul's views on Islam in India and India's Islamic past. I argue that Naipaul's attitude towards India's Islamic past was shaped by his upbringing in a Brahman family which had very rigid and biased opinions about Islamic presence in India. As I have mentioned in chapter third of this thesis that one must "never forget that he is a Brahmin" (qtd. in French 396). His family held Islam responsible for the "poverty" of India. Like his mother and sister, his father also distrusted Muslims. His father would accept "decent" person of any religion as his son-in-law except a Muslim: "If a fellow is a decent India, it doesn't matter if he is a Christian; but he should never be a Mohammedan (qtd in French 110). His family could not "forgive" Muslims and Islam for numerous "invasions of India and for forcing the partition of the subcontinent" (28). This family background, dominated by deep seated prejudices about Islam and its presence in India, coupled with his colonial education shaped his perception of India's Islamic past. His understanding of Islamic India was deeply informed by the nineteenth century colonial historiography of the Raj. This colonial education coupled with his Brahmanic family background influenced his attitudes to Islam. It is in this context that Patrick French writes that "his attitudes and outlook had been formed by his family background, his colonial education and his experiences in Britain and beyond in the 1950s and 1960s; his instincts and prejudices were intact, but his eyes were wide open, missing nothing" (279).

This chapter will try to show that Naipaul's treatment of Islam far from being objective is based on Orientalist historiographies of the Victorian England. It has been argued that Naipaul's attitude to India's Islamic history is based on

preconceptions and presumptions derived from the history written by the historians of the Raj and conditioned by his sympathies towards BJP and the Hindutva ideology of RSS. This chapter looks at Naipaul's treatment of the Third World and the Muslim countries in order to render bare the ideology that underpins his engagement with Islam and India's Islamic history.

Colonial Historiography of India and its Ideology

The nineteenth century colonial trifurcation of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British periods because of its racial, religious and colonial presumptions largely casted Muslim rule of India in a bad light. The colonial historiography was steeped in the nineteenth century Orientalist formulations about Islam and Muslims. The historians of the Raj narrowed the identities of Indians to the single one of religion and interpreted the Indian history from the perspective of religion to create a divide between Hindus and Muslims so as to bolster the British rule in India. The colonial historians, with focus on a single monolithic religious identity of Indian people, created theories of India's pre-British past which spoke of Hindu – Muslim relations only in antagonistic terms. Romila Thapar in her essay "Somnatha: Narratives of a History", on the theme of supposedly temple desecration of India by Muslims, has argued that this image of Muslims as destroyers of India's Hindu civilization was "constructed at a particular point in time and for a particular function . . . by the British for reasons of colonial politics. The British were successful in their political intention is proved by Somnatha having now become an icon of antagonism between Hindus and Muslims" (Thapar 92). She maintains that the colonial perceptions of India society had always been an antagonistic duality of Hindu and Muslim. Colonial educators and policy makers, for the reasons of Raj, made the religious identities of Indian rulers as a dominant category to explain India's past. They portrayed Islamic rule as a long night of darkness in India. They were the first to state that Muslim rule had created a trauma in India consciousness. For example, the historians of the Raj often focused on the "loot" and "destruction" of the

Somnatha temple at the hands of King Mahmud Gauri to give credence to their theory of “Islamic loot” of India. They created around this story a “simplistic historical theory that the raid of Mahmud created a trauma in the Hindu consciousness which has been at the root of Hindu-Muslim relations ever since” (Thapar 85). The influence of this colonial construction of Muslim rule in India can be gauged from the fact that, referring to Somnathan and the Hindus, K. M. Munshi wrote in 1951 that , “For a thousand years Mahmud’s destruction of the shrine has been burnt into the collective subconscious of the race as an unforgettable national disaster” (Munshi 58). In this context Thapar argues that

Interestingly what appears to be the earliest mention of a “Hindu trauma” in connection with Mahmud’s raid on Somnatha, comes from the debate in the British Parliament in London in 1843, on the question of the gates of Somnatha temple. . . It was claimed that the intention was to return what was looted from India, an act which symbolized British control over Afghanistan despite their poor showing in the Anglo-Afghan wars. It was also presented as an attempt to reverse Indian subjugation to Afghanistan in the pre-British period. (Thapar 86).

This colonial discourse which presented Muslim rulers of India as cruel and temple destroyers was given a strong ideological foundation by James Mill through his periodization of Indian history into Hindu civilization, Muslim civilization and the British period. The very terminology he used to divide Indian history reveals his ideological exigencies. Thapar writes that

In his hegemonic History of British India, published in the early nineteenth century and extensively read, Mill insists not only on the innate hostility of Hindu and Muslim, but also on the tyranny of the Muslim over the Hindu and the oppression of the Hindu by the Muslim. Mill had neither visited India nor read anything substantial on India history. The colonial interest in emphasizing this view is

clearly stated in the Introduction to Elliot and Dowson's *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, where it is said that the Hindus have to recognize that British rule is far superior for them than the rule of the Muslims. (Thapar 87)

These historians were keen to contrast what they understood as the justice and efficiency of British rule with the cruelty and despotism of the Muslim rulers who had preceded the British. They were not sympathetic to the Muslim rule. Their sole purpose in denigrating the Muslim rulers was to bolster their claims of just and enlightened rule of the Britishers. They were creating an ideological understanding of history that would reverberate even after the independence of India from the British rule. Sir Henry Elliot wrote in his original preface to *The History of India as told by its Own Historians*:

The common people must have been plunged into the lowest depths of wretchedness and despondency. The few glimpses we have, even among the short Extracts in this volume, of Hindus slain for disputing with Muhammadans, of general prohibitions against processions, worship, and ablations, and of other intolerant measures, of idols mutilated, of temples razed, of forcible conversions and marriages, of proscriptions and confiscations, of murders and massacres, and of the sensuality and drunkenness of the tyrants who enjoined them, shows us that this picture is not overcharged. (Elliot xxi)

This picture of Muslim rule in India served the Britishers well in creating the dichotomy between the Hindus and the Muslims of India. It served two purposes at the same time: one, it delegitimized Muslim rule and provided an ideological justification for the new British rule; and second, it helped the British colonial policy of divide and rule in India. Against this negative picture of Muslim rule in India Elliot constructed a positive picture of the progressive nature of the British rule in India. With the advent of the British rule, Elliot says, "a more

stirring and eventful era of India's History commences; and when the full light of European truth and discernment begins to shed its beam upon the obscurity of the past" (Elliot xvi). He claimed that the British colonial rule freed the India from "the tyranny of its former masters, and allowed to express itself in the natural language of heart, without constraint and without adulation" (xxii). He argued that his published translations "will make our native subjects more sensible of the immense advantages accruing to them under the mildness and equity of our rule" (xxii). This description of Muslim rule in India as "tyranny" and the British rule as "mild" and "equal" will have serious consequences in the future of Indian politics. It shaped not only the British attitudes towards India but also those of Hindus towards Muslims. This theme of temple desecration would continue to haunt India even after independence in 1947. It still is a very polarizing force in India polity. And it is this colonial interpretation of India's past that I argue has shaped V.S. Naipaul's attitudes towards India's Islamic past.

Islam, India and Naipaul's 'Darkness'

Naipaul's keen observatory power, photographic description of the things, persons, places and events has been cited during Nobel Prize ceremony of 2001 when Naipaul received much coveted and long awaited prestigious award. The Swedish academy maintained that the prize has been awarded to him purely on literary grounds and artistic merits. The academy lauded Naipaul for the perceptive narrative and incorruptible scrutiny he brings to his subjects and denied that they had considered anything but literary merits in awarding the prize. But looking at the provocative and often derogatory views and statements made by Naipaul about third world countries in general and about Muslim world in particular, and keeping in view the context in which Nobel prize has been awarded to him, many critics and academicians have maintained that so Naipaul has "attacked Islam and so won this year's Nobel Prize for literature" (Judith Gabriel 'Circumnavigating Islam'). Similarly, the Islamic, Educational, scientific and Cultural Organization reacted against awarding Nobel to Naipaul and protested

that Naipaul has distorted the realities of Islamic history and society in order to bolster his claim that “Islam” has been a very negative force in the histories of Muslim nations. Many writers including Derek Walcott, Nissim Ezekiel, and William Dalrymple have also resented Naipaul’s views about the Third World and Islam.

Though Naipaul has dealt with a range of social, political and ethnic themes, his main preoccupation in his non-fictional travel narratives and journalistic writings has been the ‘failure and fantasy’ of postcolonial societies and of Islam a ‘faith’. *The killings in Trinidad*, *The Loss of Eldorado* (1969), *The Overcrowded Baracoon* (1972), *The Middle Passage* (1962), deal with the Caribbean realities and that of the Africa. About Trinidad Naipaul said, “I knew Trinidad to be unimportant, uncreative and cynical”. He concludes with Orientalist triumph that the Third World countries “are half-made societies doomed to remain half-made” and “Africa has no future”. In *A Bend in the River* (1979) Naipaul expresses his racist attitude towards slaves when he says, “Slave peoples are physically wretched, half-men in everything except in their capacity to breed the next generation”. Such views about the people of former colonies do not take into account the overwhelming accounts of the destruction that the European colonizers caused in their colonies. They betray an ideological bias in favor of the Western civilization. The similar kind of prejudiced ideas and stereotypes are repeated in the Indian trilogy: *An Area of Darkness* (1964); *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977); *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990). Indian is an “area of darkness” to which he travelled in 1962. But here he finds nothing other than what he has already known or read: “world’s largest slum” (Naipaul, *An Area* 126). In India people “defecate everywhere. They defecate, mostly, besides the railway tracks” (70). The scorn with which he speaks about poor people of India is apparent when he finds “Indian sleepers on an Indian railway station” (84). My point here is not that such things are merely fictitious. My argument is that no description of any former colony be considered ‘objective’ until it takes into consideration the colonial and neocolonial realities of those societies. This is all

the more important when writers like Naipaul use such descriptions to hail the Euro-American civilization for its “openness”, “progress” and “modernity”. Instead, I argue that no account of Western ‘modernity’ is complete without the recognition of the historical fact that the same period of “progress” was experienced as a disaster by countries like India, regions like Africa, and Middle East. In this context, I maintain, that Naipaul’s failure to recognize and accept this stark reality reveals his ideological bias towards what he calls “Our Universal Civilization”. So far introducing Western institutions in colonies is concerned, Lord Macaulay’s “The Minutes on Education” is an important document that throws light on colonial policy towards colonies. It shows the colonial attitude towards colonized culture and civilization. It sheds light on the British government’s colonial policy to destroy the indigenous languages, culture, history, and literature on the one hand, and, on the other, to introduce Western institutions and education that would have served to legitimize the colonial rule in India. Similarly, in *India: A Wounded Civilization* Naipaul calls India a wounded civilization- “wounded” by Muslim invasions. Without any regard for historical analysis and research, Naipaul’s anti-Islamic bias makes him conclude that Islam has “wounded” Indian civilization beyond repair. This creation of a very stereotypical image of Muslim rule as “tyranny” will be dealt with in the sections of this chapter. It is pertinent here to say what Meena Kandasamy has said regarding Naipaul’s image of India as constructed in his India travelogues about: “Sir Vidyadhar Surajprasad Naipaul has spat on us. Spat too much on India that we are actually stinking from his spitting expeditions” (Kandasamy ‘Casteist, Communalist, Racist’). According to her, Naipaul’s disgust for the deprived is very clear. She believes that he is a casteist, communalist and a racist. Like someone said of him: a colonial among colonials.

Naipaul has created a storm in the Muslim intellectual and academic world by his provocative and, what writers such as William Dalrymple calls, his “jaundiced” and “anti-Islamic views” so far as his treatment of India’s Islamic past is concerned. He has been severely criticized by William Dalrymple for his

treatment of Islam and Islamic history. Even those who call him the greatest writer of English prose doubt his knowledge of historical facts. “Naipaul’s credentials as a historian, however, are less secure”, writes Dalrymple in “Trapped in the Ruins” (2004). According to Dalrymple, Naipaul’s criticism of Islam and his “entirely negative understanding of India’s Islamic history has its roots firmly in the mainstream imperial historiography of Victorian Britain” (Dalrymple ‘Trapped in Ruins’). Naipaul’s social and political commentary on the Third World has been seen as reflecting what the western academics wanted from him and “the politics of Naipaul” has thus earned him the title “a colonial among the colonials” (Kandasamy ‘Casteist, Communalist, Racist’). His negative image of Islam becomes clear to us when we put that in the context of his commitment to the Hindutva ideology of Rastriya Samsawka Sangh. Not only the mainstream historiography of Victorian Britain but also his allegiance to anti- Islamic Hindu chauvinistic ideology and political thought of Sangh Parivar has played a tremendously important role in forming and expressing the negative views about Islam. His allegiance to Sangh Parivar and its ideology is confirmed beyond doubt by his visit to “the office of India’s ruling Hindu nationalist party, the Bartya Janata Party, and gave what many in the Indian press took to be a pre-election endorsement not just of the party but of the entire far right-wing revivalist program” (Dalrymple ‘Trapped in Ruins’). He had maintained that India was surging forward under the Hindutva ideology represented and upheld by the political wing of the Sangh Parivar, Bartya Janta Party. He had “declared himself happy” at having being “appropriated” by the party (Khadmeul Islam ‘Naipaul’s Rage’). BJP and the entire Sangh Parivar, along with its lesser cultural wings, have always been seen expressing and propagating anti- Islamic views. It has become notorious not only in India but throughout the world for its prejudice Islam and Muslims of India. Sangh Parivar’s main ideology is that India is basically a Hindu nation; the invasions of India by Muslim rulers have been a long period of destruction and plunder, and therefore the right place for Muslims is either in Pakistan or in the grave. Naipaul’s Hindu prejudices against Islam and Muslim rule in India can be understood from the statements he made about the

destruction of Babura Masjid, an event that led to the death of thousands of Muslims in India. When world's and India's historians and intellectuals were lamenting the loss of secular credentials of India, Naipaul "decided it represented evidence of regeneration. He gave an interview to the *Times of India* which suggested in guarded terms that he approved of what had happened.

One needs to understand the passion that took them on top of the domes. The jeans and the T-shirts are superficial. The passion alone is real. You can't dismiss it . . . The movement is now from below . . . Wise men should understand it and ensure that it does not remain in the hands of fanatics. Rather they should use it for the intellectual transformation of India . . . For the poor of India to identify something like this, pulling down the first Mughal emperor's tomb, is a marvelous idea. I think in years to come it will be seen as a great moment, and it will probably become a public holiday. It would be a historical statement of India striving to regain her soul . . . What puzzled me and outraged me was the attitude that it was wrong, that one mustn't undo the (Muslim) conquest. I think it is the attitude of a slave population. (qtd in Patrick French 460)

Naipaul's Hindu biases against Islam and Muslims would abundantly become clear if one compares this with his ideas about the denial of history on part of the Muslims of Indonesia and Malaysia, his opinions about the faith of Islam being against history (with which I dealt with in the previous chapters of this book). In this context Patrick French comments:

Hindu nationalists planned to excavate beneath the mosque in order to find the birthplace of the deity Ram; but Ram was a mythological figure. It was a mystical view of history, lacking vigor, choosing pieces of evidence that supported the idea of undoing the past . . . The political fragmentation and the hundreds

of deaths in the rioting that followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid were not his concern: 'I didn't kill them myself. What was I doing in 1992? That was a very bad year. That was the year when I could barely walk. I had surgery on my spine'. (460)

If one compares this endorsement of Hindutva anti-Muslim policies with what Naipaul says about "the revival of Islam", which according to him is "neurosis" and "nihilism", one would be left with no doubt about the politics of Naipaul subscribes to. In Naipaul's scheme of things Hindu religious fundamentalism is "India striving to regain her soul", but "Islamic fundamentalism" is "a fantasy. Perhaps only shut-away tribal communities can have strong and simple ideas of who they are. The rest of us are for the most part culturally mixed, in varying degrees, and everyone lives in his own way with his complexity" (Naipaul, *Beyond Belief* 59). No luxury for Muslims to "regain" their soul. The underlying assumption of Naipaul's endorsement of the Babri Masjid demolition is that the "Islam" had killed India's civilizational vigor. It had put a break on the civilizational progress of "Hindu" India; Islam had thrown India into a dark night of pillage and destruction. Islam had "wounded" the "Hindu" Indian civilization. As compared to the "marvelous idea" of "regaining" the "lost" soul of India's Hindu civilization, "revival of Islam", according to Naipaul, "in the modern world was a dangerous fantasy. At its simplest it was a wish for security; it also contained an idea of exclusivity . . . In many ways it was a dream of a society ethnically cleansed" (145). Criticizing Hindutva fundamentalism is "attitude of a slave population" while the critique of "rage" of Islam is the intellectual vocation given by Western "universal civilization". Western civilization is "universal", Hindutva fundamentalism is "striving for soul" and a "marvelous idea"; "Islamic fundamentalism" is "rage" and "nihilism". Islamic fundamentalists were "insecure, with their unhistorical view, feared contamination. But fundamentalism offered nothing. It pushed men to an unappeasable faith. It offered a political desert" (Naipaul *Among the Believers* 178).

I argue that this double standard regarding the world religious fundamentalist movements reveals Naipaul's biases against Islam in general and India's Islamic history in particular. Naipaul's comments in an interview summarize it all:

To say that India has a secular character is being historically unsound. Dangerous or not, Hindu militancy is a corrective to the history to the history I have been talking about. It is a creative force and will be so. Islam cannot reconcile with it". (November 15, 1999, *Outlook*)

Indian writers like Meena Kandasamy have argued that Naipaul's opinions on India's history are a "distortion of history" in the Sangh Parivar style "to produce a saffron history with a sacred thread" (Kandasamy 'Casteist, Communalist, Racist'). She calls Naipaul a "highly prejudiced Hindutva torchbearer" who, in his travel works on India and the Muslim world, is constructing Sangh Parivar's version of history, thereby willfully distorting facts and figures. For example, Meena questions Naipaul's account of the Brahmanic concept of fasting. Naipaul believed that in the ancient days Brahmanic priestly caste was supported by the Hindu temples, and because of Muslim invasion, the temples became poorer and the Brahman priests were caught in a web of poverty. This poverty led to the practice of fasting among the priestly class of Hindus. That is, Naipaul's point is that Muslim "invasions" are responsible for the destruction of the economic life of the Hindu's of India, and it forced them to adopt certain practices which they did not have before. This is Naipaul's version of self-denial. Instead of "Islamic invasions" forcing Brahmans to fast, it was the Brahmnic code enshrined in the Manusmiriti that established the practice of fasting as a penance for sins. This law-book was composed even before the birth of Christ, not to talk of Prophet Mohammad. There were no Islamic invasions and conversions at that time. To blame the Brahmanic concept of fasting on Islamic invasions is a "highly crooked way of interpreting and representing history" (Kandasamy 'Casteist, Communalist, Racist'). This interpretation of history according to which

the Hindus of India suffered at the hands of Muslims is more in tune with the Hindutva propaganda about “Islamic barbarism” than an objective analysis of the past of India.

The Muslim rule in India has always been Naipaul’s preoccupation. He considered Islam’s presence in India a negative historical force. He has dealt with it in *An Area of Darkness, India: A Wounded Civilization* and *Among the Believers*. Throughout his travelogues he attempted to resurrect what according to him is the “correct history” of Sind and Muslim India. Therefore, in “Killing History”, a section in *Among the Believers*, Naipaul talks about the *Chachnama*, a book which was written five hundred years after the conquest of Sind by Muslim rulers, and which according to him provides the correct version of the India history. He refers to *Chachnama* and maintains that “Hijaj has issued precise instructions for this first victory: the residents of Debal are not to be spared. The Arab army has to slaughter for three days: this is what Bin Qasim tells the people of Debal” (Naipaul, *Among the Believers* 138). Naipaul presents this as a story of slaughter and barbarism: Muslims came here to loot. In this context Meena Kandasamy has written that Naipaul indulges in selective representation of history of India to substantiate his anti- Islamic bias. She writes that Naipaul has plainly not mentioned the woes of the oppressed caste majorities during these periods of Brahmin tyranny. Or the glaring truth that the Buddhist majority and oppressed castes converted willingly to Islam to escape their sufferings. Or that Mohammad Bin Qasim invaded Sind to release Muslim women who were held hostage in a captured ship. This too has been chronicled in the *Chachnama* but Naipaul chose not to deal with this aspect of history because it undercuts the neat narrative of Muslim tyranny and misrule. T. N. Madan in *Modern Myths, Locked Minds* (2009) also reiterates the same opinion that Mohammad Bin Qasim invaded Sind because the king of Sind denied Qasim’s request to protect ships of Arab traders from pirates. But Naipaul’s account of *Chachnama* makes no mention of it.

I maintain that Naipaul's treatment of Muslim rule in India is compatible with and serves the Hindutva right wing revisionists who present Muslim rule as a long and dark night of ignorance and destruction. He says in the *Beyond Belief* that the Muslim period was a "force looting the temples of Hindustan and imposing the faith upon the infidel" (Naipaul, *Beyond Belief* 247)]. Naipaul's statements such as his remarks that the first Mughal emperor Babur's invasion of India "left a deep wound" are consistent with the ideas he has been propagating for many years now. In 1998 he told *the Hindu* newspaper:

I think when you see so many Hindu temples of 10th century or earlier disfigured, defaced, you realize that something terrible happened. I feel that the civilization of that closed world was mortally wounded by those invasions . . . The old world is destroyed. That has to be understood. Ancient Hindu India was destroyed". (Naipaul in *The Hindu* 1998)

This line of thought has been consistent in Naipaul from *An Area of Darkness* (1964) to *Beyond Belief*. In *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1975) he surveys the shattered ruins of the great medieval Hindu capital of Vijayanagar and goes on to lament the fall of this "great center of Hindu civilization", then one of the greatest cities of the world. He believes that it was destroyed in 1565 "by an alliance of Muslim principalities and the work of destruction took five months; some people say a year" (Naipaul, *India: A Wounded* 77). He thought that "Vijayanagar was committed from the start to the preservation of a Hinduism that had already been violated. . ." (79), and therefore, he believed that it had failed to develop military means to challenge the aggressive Muslims sultanates that surrounded it.

For Naipaul the fall of Vijayanagar is the paradigmatic wound on the psyche of India, part of a long series of failures that he believes still bruises India's self-confidence. The wound, according to him, was created by a fatal combination of Islamic aggression and Hindu weakness. Throughout his *oeuvre*

Naipaul talks about Vijayanagar as the empire of Hinduism that was later “defeated and physically laid waste by a combination of Muslim rulers; almost at the same time, in the north, the Mogul power was entering its time of glory” (143). This is Naipaul’s account of India’s Islamic history: a tale of destruction and devastation. However, as the foremost historian of Mughal India, William Dalrymple, has argued, “Naipaul’s entirely negative understanding of India’s Islamic history has its roots firmly in the mainstream imperial historiography of Victorian Britain” (Dalrymple ‘Trapped in Ruins’). The Muslim invasions of India tended to be seen by the colonial historians of the Raj as a long brutal sequence of pillage in stark contrast to the law and order selflessly brought about by the Britishers. Similarly, art historian Catherine Asher and the historian Cynthia Talbot in their book *India Before Europe* document the same views. The authors record that it were the British scholars who, in their antipathy to Muslims, said that Asian society was fundamentally divided along religious lines and that Muslim rulers were harsh to non-Muslim subjects. This conviction was not only expressed in British modes of thinking about south Asia’s people but also in their politics to ward them. This colonial historical discourse about the tyranny of Muslim rule would later on influence Indian nationalists and Sangh Parivar ideologues to cast the Muslims of India as similar to the colonial British in being alien invaders and oppressors. Praising the British rule as compared to Muslim rule, Naipaul wrote that “finally through the unlikely British presence in India, a Hindu India had grown again, more complete and unified than any India in the past” (Naipaul, *India: A Wounded* 143]. Again, Naipaul maintains that the “British period . . . was a time of regeneration”. Such and other views of Naipaul about the ‘destructive’ rule of Muslims and the regeneration of Hindus under British colonialism are seen by the serious historian so India as a willful distortion of India’s past. *India Before Europe* documents that the British scholars presented the rulers of Vijayanagar “not as kings who promoted a cosmopolitan culture that valued Islamicate traditions, but rather as the champions of Hinduism against predatory Muslims” simply to give credence to their own rule and pit Hindus

against Muslims to make their own task easy. Critiquing this representation of Vijayanagar as a fortress against Muslim barbarism, Richard Eaton writes that

Such disjunctures between the rhetoric and the practice of royal sovereignty also appear, of course, with respect to the founding of non-Muslim states. We know, for example, that Brahman ideologues, writing in chaste Sanskrit, spun elaborate tales of how warriors and sages founded the Vijayanagara state by combining forces for a common defense for *dharma* from assaults by barbaric (*mleccha*) Turkic outsiders. His is the Vijayanagara of rhetoric, a familiar story. But the Vijayanagara of practical politics rested on very different foundations, which included the adoption of the titles, the dress, the military organization, the ruling ideology, the architecture, and the political economy of the contemporary Islamicate world. As with Indo-Muslim states, we hear of such practices mainly from outsiders – merchants, diplomats, travelers – and not from Brahman chroniclers and ideologues. (Eaton 121, italics in original)

These professional historians of India have argued that this distortion of history, earlier by the British colonial historians and later, after independence by Sangh Parivar ideologues, has served to obscure the rich composite culture of south Asia which started to come into being after 1200 and fully matured during the Mughal era. A G Noorani in “Story of Synthesis”, a review of the book *India Before Europe*, writes that the book is the study of Indian history and culture from 1200 to 1750, and it reveals the fruitful cross-cultural interaction between Islamic and Hindu civilization. According to Noorani, the “Muslim scholars, mystics and institutions enriched the already pluralistic human landscape of south Asia and, over time, a composite culture developed that drew on both the Indic and Perso- Islamic tradition” (Noorani ‘Story of Synthesis). Historians of India do not accept the label Muslim that was applied to the period 1200-1750 in histories

of south Asia written during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Historians object to the use of the religious affiliation to characterize the set of rulers who ruled the subcontinent during this period. According to Eaton

Contemporary Sanskrit inscriptions never identified Indo-Muslim invaders in terms of their religion, as Muslims, but most generally in terms of their linguistic affiliation (most typically as Turk, 'turushka'). That is, they were construed as but one ethnic community in India amidst many others. (Eaton 122)

Historians have argued that the era from 1200 to 1750 is the foundation for the highly pluralistic human landscape of modern south Asia, with its composite culture that draws on both Indic and Islamic high traditions in many and rich regional variants. This composite culture came under threat after the Partition from the votaries of Hindutva who are known notoriously for their anti- Islamic and anti- Muslim sentiments and policies.

The tradition, practiced by V. S. Naipaul to present Vijayanagar as the custodian of Hinduism, which, according to his was destroyed by Muslim invasions, was started by the historians of the Raj and later on was perpetuated by ideologues of the Sangh Parivar. The fall of Vijayanagar was written up in elegiac terms by Robert Sewel whose book *Vijayanagar: A Forgotten Empire* first characterized the kingdom as a Hindu bulwark against Mohammadan conquests, a single brave but doomed attempt at resistance to Islamic aggression. The problem is that such ideas rest on a set of mistaken and Islamophobic assumptions that recent scholarship has done much to undermine. Phillip Wagoner wrote an essay entitled "A Sultan Among Hindu Kings" in 1996. The essay falsifies the claim that in the realm of cultural policy Vijayanagar strived to contain the spread of Islam and to preserve Hindu purity in the southern peninsula. It rejects the view that Vijayanagar was insulated from the broader cultural influences of neighboring Muslim dynasties and that Vijayanagar was destroyed by a combination of Muslim rulers. Contrary to Naipaul's formulations it is now widely recognized

that the actual patterns of political conflicts and wars in South India between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries cannot be understood in terms of a simple Hindu-Muslim conflict because in South India “both Hindu and Muslim states fought among themselves as much as they did against one another” (Wagoner 852). Contrary to the Hindu - Muslim conflict envisaged by Naipaul, Wagoner argues that

. . . the Hindu culture in Vijayanagar was in fact deeply transformed by its interaction with Islamic culture” and that “this transformation, far from being the result of mere changes in taste of fashion, was a deliberately calculated act on the part of Vijayanagar’s courtly elite, and that it was integrally related to changes in the political culture of the court” (854).

The Islamic- inspired forms and practices altered the courtly life and cultural manifestations of the Vijayanagar period in such diverse areas as military technology and strategy, political and administrative institutions. The transformations in the material culture of the court were a direct result of nearly two centuries of intense and creative interaction with the Islamic world. In order to highlight the cultural influences of Islam on the Vijayanagara cultural life Wagoner argues that the Hindu kings of Vijayanagar appeared in public audience not bare chested, as has been a tradition in Hindu India, but dressed in quasi-Islamic court costume - the Islamic inspired *kafayi*, a long-sleeved tunic derived from Arabic *qaba*, symbolic, according to Wagoner, of their participation in the more universal culture of Islam. Vijayanagar underwent what Wagoner calls “Islamicization” - a dynamic and creative process of cultural, political, economic and military technological change, a process that has nothing to do with religious conversion or syncretism. Thus the Islamicate culture of Vijayanagar was not a result of some inevitable consequences of the onslaught of Islam, but quite the opposite as the result of conscious and deliberately calculated acts of creative individual’s seeking to maximize their opportunities in an ever-widening world.

Wagoner also maintains that the indigenous Indic sources in the Vijayanagar period do not speak of Islam or Muslims, but identify the bearers of Islamicate civilization in the Deccan in the ethnic terms, speaking inevitably of Turks.

Naipaul's account of India's Islamic history and therefore, his treatment of Islam, are highly erroneous. Accurate or inaccurate, Naipaul's account of Islam in India only talks about the rulers and their "devastating" invasions. He gives no room to Sufis in his historiography. In spreading Islam in India, Sufis were the main force, and any account of Indian Islamic history cannot be considered objective or accurate that does not give ample space to them. As William Dalrymple has written that "it is widely known, for example, that Islam in India was spread much less by sword than by Sufis and yet Sufism, clearly central to any discussion of medieval India barely makes any appearance in Naipaul's work" (Dalrymple 'Trapped in Ruins'). Sufism with its holy men, visions, and miracles and its emphasis on the individuals search for union with God has always born remarkable similarities to the mystical side of Hinduism. And it was under Sufi influence that the two religions almost fused into one, with Hindus visiting Sufi graves, while "Muslim villagers would leave offerings at temples to ensure the birth of children and good harvest" (Dalrymple, *Seven Lives* 109). Although in India communalist feelings loom large now, still Sufi Dargahs attract as many Hindu, Sikh and Christian pilgrims as they do Muslims. The history of Indian Sufism abounds in attempts by mystics to overcome the gap between the two great traditions and to seek God not through sectarian rituals but through the wider gateway of the human heart. Also notably absent in Naipaul's work is any mention of the remarkable religious tolerance of the Moghals. Neither Akbar nor Dara Shukh makes any sort of appearance in Naipaul's writing on India's Islamic past, and his readers will learn nothing of the former's enthusiastic patronage of Hindu temples of latter's work translating the Gita into Persian. Naipaul makes no mention of Dara Shukh's book *The Mingling of Oceans*, a study of Hinduism and Islam which emphasizes the perfect compatibility of the two faiths and speculates that the *Upanishads* were the source of monotheism.

In this chapter I have argued that Naipaul's understanding of India's Islamic history is based on nineteenth century colonial histories of Raj. British historians like Elliot and Mills were the first to portray Muslims as cruel and in terms of purely religious terms. They did so not only to delegitimize the pre-British rule of Muslim rulers, but also to give ideological justification for the British colonial policies in India. This colonial education coupled with Naipaul's predominantly Hindu background colored his perceptions of Muslim rule in India, and he portrayed it as long history of 'darkness'.

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CONCLUSION

V. S. Naipaul's writings have garnered much critical attention and praise. His fictional works have been read and re-read over the years from diverse critical and theoretical perspectives. Some postcolonial writers who are interested in the formation of postcolonial identities have pointed out Naipaul's analysis of such issues in his novels. Issues of exile, diasporic identities, nation formation and the relationship between center and periphery have been dealt by Naipaul in his fictional narratives. Social, political, racial, and ethnic tensions between different socio-religious groups in former colonies have been the focus of his literary gaze. It is in this context that he has been hailed by some in the Western world as the interpreter of postcolonial societies. His diagnosis of the corruption of the former colonies in Africa, South America, and Asia have been lauded as 'objective' and 'disinterested' interpretation of the ill of those societies. In addition to fictional narratives, Naipaul has enriched the world literature with travel narratives and journalistic pieces which he considered as important as his novels. Therefore, in recognition of his contribution to the world of letters, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001.

Though literary critics and theorists have almost unanimously admired him for his talents as a brilliant writer of English language, his opinions and ideas have been received very differently by them. Writers in Anglo-American world have praised him as the interpreter of the societies of the former colonies. However, most of the writers of the Third World have taken a very critical stance against Naipaul's opinions and ideas about the former colonies. They have pointed out that his political ideology is tainted by outright racist and colonial discourse. His depiction of Indian, African, and, especially Islam and Muslim countries, are said to be influenced by his colonial education. He has been seen as a 'brown sahib' who had a life-long nostalgia for empire. This critique has been especially made in relation to his writings on Islam and, what he himself called, "the rage of Islam". Following this critical and colonial

discourse theory, I have argued that in the political atmosphere of late twentieth century Naipaul's depiction of "Islam" as an anti-thesis of the "Western" 'universal civilization' has functioned as a contemporary version of the nineteenth century colonial discourse which was and still is designed to justify and legitimize neoimperial and exploitative power relations between West and the Muslim countries. Late twentieth century saw increasing Euro-American and Israeli military interventions in the Middle East and in other Muslim countries around the world. Israeli settler colonialism in the historical Palestine, American intervention in Iran during and after Iranian Revolution in 1979, Euro-American intervention in Afghan resistance against Soviet Union, American invasion and NATO bombarding of Iraq and Libya are some of the critical political events that pitted the militarily powerful Western nations, headed by US and Israel, against some of the Muslim countries in and outside the Arab world. Establishment writers and Orientalists like Lewis and Huntington formulated their theories of "rage" and "revolt" of Islam. They portrayed resistance movements of Muslims, which drew on Islam as source of revolutionary ideology, as "Islamic fundamentalism", and claimed a "clash of civilizations" involving "open", "rational", and "democratic" West on one side and "closed", "irrational" and "primitive" Islam. This binary characterization of Islam and West acted as an explanatory category with which the supporters of American imperial structure justified their military buildup and interventions in the Middle East.

My theoretical position is that in order to better understand Naipaul's Islamic travelogues we cannot discount this overarching neoimperial and settler colonialism which has shaped and circumscribed the debates around Islam and Muslims. During this period old Orientalist images, stereotypes, tropes, and ideas about the Islamic Orient resurfaced in the mainstream Euro-American world with a new vigor. Orientalists like Lewis began to explain "the Muslim mind" to the Western readership, and put forward the politically charge polemic about "the roots of Muslim rage". Naipaul too, I have maintained,

contributed to this demonization of Islam by his own version of “rage” and “revival” polemic. His Islamic travelogues and his nonfiction writings like “Our Universal Civilization” gave new steam to the old Orientalist dichotomy between “progressive” West and “primitive” Islam. His writings about Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia are full of dogmatic assertions about the supposed backwardness of Islam and the civilization it gave rise to. He associated problematic ideas like “neurosis”, “rage”, “fantasy”, and “irrationality” with the political movements of Muslims, and argued that the main source of the Muslim “rage” is Islam. According to him, Islam is a dangerous form of “colonization” which he thought is planning to take over the rest of the world. He represented Islam as an “anti-intellectual” and an “uncreative” force that has destroyed the creative energies among its adherents. Against this stereotypical image of Islam, he portrays the West as a “universal civilization” which, he believed, represents the perfection of human civilization. This civilization is “rational”, “intellectual”, “scientific”, “open”, “tolerant” and “accommodating”; in other words, it is everything which Islam is not. Naipaul connects these images and ideas to argue that the most important “enemy” of the “western” civilization is this “rage” and “revival of Islam”. By using Edward Said’s writings on Orientalism and the relationship between cultural forms and imperialism, I have argued that Naipaul’s representation of Islam and Muslim anticolonial political movements draws heavily on the nineteenth century Orientalist portrayals of Muslims as “primitive” people who threaten the balance of the “civilized” West.

I have situated Naipaul’s writings on Islam within the late twentieth century historical moment characterized by neoimperial reconfiguration which is headed by the only world super power, US. I have linked his political ideas with those of new cold-warriors who posited “Islam” as a “threat” to the West. After the demise of the Soviet Union, they replaced the ‘red peril’ with ‘green peril’. I have maintained that this portrayal of Islam as a negative force in history is not an isolated aberration; rather it is the mainstream notion, and it is

given a cultural legitimacy by writers like V. S. Naipaul. I have not taken the position that there are no militant Islamist movements in the Muslim world; there are as there are in other religions and places. Even “our universal civilization” has its own share of militant organizations that drawn on religion for the legitimacy of their causes. Nazis, neo-Nazis, Evangelical Zionists, Jewish Zionists, Hindutva fanatics are some of the other militant organizations that use religion as a legitimizing force. My point is that Naipaul’s obsession with the “rage of Islam” and his idea that “faith” of Muslims around the world is the sole cause of the “neurosis” and “rage” of those communities is fundamentally flawed and untenable. It is a highly motivated and an ideological stand masqueraded as an “expert” and “objective” reportage. After Mahmood Mamdani, I have called this approach Cultural Talk: a kind of cultural determinism that purports to explain social, political, and economic phenomenon on the basis of some kind of a cultural essence. This culturalist argument is an affirmation of irreducible unique traits of culture or faith that are said to determine the course of history or civilization. For Naipaul this transhistorical category is “Islam”: an ideological construction which he uses to explain everything that happens in the Muslim world.

Since my claim is that cultural forms like travelogues cannot be explained without taking into consideration the larger political, historical and imperial context within which travel and travel writing takes place, in my first chapter titled “Culture, Travel, and Imperialism” I have given an account of how and when was Asia subordinated by European colonial powers. I have pointed out that the colonized spaces were not only politically and economically subjugated; their cultural, spiritual and intellectual life was also disrupted and looked down upon by the colonial powers who considered themselves superior. I have maintained that colonization altered not only their economies but their ways of life, feeling, and their structures of thought were also changed. I have argued that though physical and psychological violence is at the heart of colonialism, the legitimizing discourses are formed in and

through cultural expressions. I have claimed that there is a deep symbiotic relationship between colonial power relations and cultural forms that narrativize the colonial setting and ideology.

Chapter II is called “Naipaul, Clash of Civilizations and Resurgence of Empire”. In this chapter I have shown that Naipaul’s construction of the binary between ‘universal’ West and ‘parasitic’ Islam is a part of late twentieth century Orientalist discourse represented by people like Lewis and Huntington. It has been argued that during the last decades of twentieth century American interventions in the Muslim world were part of the neoimperial power relations that were forming during and after the end of the Cold War. In such a situation, I have maintained, Naipaul’s representation of Islam as ‘reactionary’ and ‘anti-modern’ and West as an “open” and “universal civilization” has given credence to the ‘clash of civilization thesis’ that has been used by policy think tanks to influence American foreign policy with regard to the Muslim world. This has created an image of Islam as a threat, which is subsequently used to justify further military interventions in the Muslim world.

In the third chapter “Islam, West, and V. S. Naipaul’s Construction of Islam as a ‘Threat’” I have argued that V. S. Naipaul constructed the binary opposition between essentialized forms of “Islam” and “West” at a time of intense political unrest between some Muslim nations and the US-Israel colonial policies in the Middle East. It has also been stated that his representation of Islam as an uncompromising form of “imperialism” and “colonization” is a projection of aims and methods of US colonial and neoimperial power relations that were accruing during the last few decades of twentieth century. I have argued that Naipaul, like Lewis and Huntington, has used old Orientalist clichés to portray Islam as a threat to the balance not only of its adherents but also of the Western civilization. I add that as a new Orientalist, Naipaul performed the task of ‘informing’ the West about culture

of Islam so that it would be easy for the Western governments to ‘understand’ and, then, to control the Muslim lands.

Chapter IV is titled as “Naipaul and India’s Islamic History: An Assessment”. This chapter has looked at Naipaul’s attitude towards Muslim presence in India, and I have maintained that his treatment of Islamic history of India was shaped by the preconceptions and assumptions derived from the history written by historians of the Raj. In other words, I have shown how the nineteenth century colonial historiography has informed Naipaul understands of Indian history and how, as a result of that, he portrayed India’s Islamic past a long night of darkness.

In this thesis I have essentially maintained that the project of anticolonial critique needs to be strengthened and fully articulated, particularly in relation to defining its opposition to neoimperial imperatives today. Instead of purely textual idealism, that has dominated the colonial discourse theory under the influence of poststructuralist and postmodernist insistence on difference, I argue that anticolonial critique would do better if it brings the hard materiality of history, politics and economics back to bear upon the analysis of cultural forms. However, I would like to mention that this thesis has not dealt in detail the diverse debates around the politics of representation and the processes of othering. This is one of the limitations of this thesis. The framework which I have tried to develop here can be further developed if it is applied to other cultural forms like films and cinema, especially films made by Hollywood during and after the Iranian Revolution. Increasingly large numbers of films have resorted to Orientalist clichés to present Muslims as villains and terrorists in movies. The framework of this thesis can be used to better understand the relationship between those movies and the US imperial policies and actions.

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