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## Politics of 'wonders' and Colonial Cultural Institutions: V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*

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### ABSTRACT

In "Signs taken for 'wonders'" Homi Bhabha deliberates on the effect of colonial encounter on the colonized subjects as a result of their introduction to colonial cultural discourse which he calls the "emblem of the English book". Thus, how colonizers are able to inscribe their own "book" or cultural discourse, their own mentality and their own narratives of identity onto the mind and imagination of the colonized is central to postcolonial studies, what this paper strives to find out in the example of Naipaul's alienated character in *Half a Life* (2001) and *Magic Seeds* (2004). This paper argues that there are two species of "wonders" depending on the sort of colonized subjects' exposure to the colonial cultural discourse; one which is effected on the classic scene of colonial cultural encounter and the other one which is effected on the scene of colonial cultural institutions, especially educational ones. Naipaul's characters make it clear that the roots of the strange fragmented familial, religious, cultural or emotional experience of identity which dislocates, displaces and deracinates individuals from their homes transforming them into wanderers across the international scenes or metropolitan centers lie in the second sense of Bhabhaite "wonders, possessing their soul in their encounter with "the emblem of the English Book", the sense that effects a different form of response from the colonized subjects.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Discourse, Naipaul, Cultural Institutions, Homi Bhabha, Missionary Schools, Religion, Postcolonial*

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### 1. Introduction

The impact of colonial intrusion into colonies is the concern of postcolonial studies. A cursory survey of, almost all, intellectual efforts done in the field illustrates the broad array of subjects covered in this field: scientific, economic, cultural, political and social, to name but a few. Besides, these subject areas in turn cover a broad array of sub-topics: scientific area covers researches on environment, technology, disease and climate change; economics has analyses of development, materialism and globalization; cultural aspect works on interpretations of race, multiculturalism, identity and education; politics has debates on political economy, Marxism, independence, nationalism and resistance; and social terrain inquires into social structure, religion, tradition and change (see Seth 2009, Kraidy 2005, Rizvi

2007, Ong 1999, Sharpe 1995, King 2000 and Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus 2002).

In cultural studies of colonial encounter, the thirst for debates on identity or cultural identity never recedes. Hence, studies on Naipaul as a postcolonial writer is not an exception to this general trend. In fact, obsession with self and identity is what many have marked in Naipaul's works. For instance, Edward Baugh in "The Making and Self-Making of V. S. Naipaul" observes *Half a Life* as the portrayal of the inefficiency of British Colonial system in India and the depiction of the second aspect of Naipaulean literary personality, that is the formation of the self and identity as a product in which two factors play an important role: the setting or the time and the place one is born into as a self-made process (Baugh, 2007, p. 5). What is the definition of place in the mind of an individual and the state of having a post-

colonial identity is the subject of Mishras' study of Naipaul's works and for the writer of "Obsession for Finding Roots in Magic Seeds" the quest after unity and wholeness of one's self is the main theme. He argues that the main character's process of self-negation starts early in his childhood.

Besides the question of identity, Naipaul's representations of colonies in his works have been the subject of an ongoing debate, some expressing even searing and caustic ones, especially from some of the gurus of the field of postcolonial studies. Edward Said classifies him among "shamelessly precolonial renegades" (Said, *Orientalism reconsidered*, 1985, p. 98). Homi K. Bhabha finds him as the writer who has been engrossed by the "wonders" of English culture, one who has renounced his identity, his past and has turned "his back on the hybrid half-made colonial world to fix his eyes on the universal domain of English literature" (TLC, 1994, p. 107). Here, we want to find the potential factors involved in the formation of cultural identity based on what we learn from Naipaul's two recent works *Half a Life* (2001) and, its sequel, *Magic Seeds* (2004) and to observe whether what Bhabha finds out about the identity of the Naipaulean works in 1984 is still true after twenty years when *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* were published in 2001 and 2004. Furthermore, the main argument of this study is that Willie, the anti-hero of both these novels is implicated with the second type of "wonders" as a result of his long-time exposure to "the emblem of the English book" or colonial cultural discourse due to mainly faulty social structure of the spatio-temporality into which he is born into.

## 2. Approaches and Methodologies

Bhabha in his theorizations on the nature of the colonial encounter in his unorthodox paper of the time "Signs taken for "wonders": Questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817" introduces the concept of "the English book" and interprets its effect on the colonized subjects as "wondrous" (1985, p. 144). He interprets a report in the register books of colonial missionaries working in India to elaborate on the politics of "wonders". For him, the story related in the register book is the classic scenario of colonialism enacted all-over the world whenever and wherever colonizers arrived at a new colony, whether it is Africa, America or Asia; the scenario is "the sudden, fortuitous discovery of the English

book" and its impact as the magical instrument of control exercised on the imagination and longings of the colonized, he relates several passages at length to illustrate the capacity of the representative of colonial cultural discourse or "the emblem of the English book" to create myths of origination and authenticity in the colonized minds (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2001, p. 9). What is interesting for us in this paper is the main passage that helps him to build the framework of his interpretations on the nature of the colonial encounter that is the narrative of a group of Indian's conversion to Christianity in 1819 outside Delhi and a passage he quotes from Naipaulean encounter with the emblem of colonial culture which converts him from his semi-colonial setting of his Trinidad to be engrossed and overwhelmed by the "wonders" of "the universal domain of English literature" (Bhabha, TLC, 1994, p. 107). In the first case, "the English book" becomes a space for "a process of mutual transformation... in the constant struggle over constituting and reconstituting hegemony" (S Charusheela, 2003, p. 180). But in the last case, it turns out into the site of full fathomed victory over the colonized Naipaul. For Bhabha, Naipaul's account of his encounter with English literature is the narrative of the success of colonial cultural system to impose its cultural politics of "wonders" on the colonized subjects. In other words, according to him, the stories of colonial encounter like the one he is relating from the Indian missionary register books or the Naipaulean encounter are not only the narratives of conversion relating "before and after", but also, at the same time are the depictions of the desire of colonials "to impose their value systems onto indigenous cultures" based on the binary logic of colonialism, a simplistic cultural politics which ignores the complexities of "cultural fusion" (Research, 2005, p. 284).

What Bhabha in his discussions on the concept of "the emblem of the English book" or the impact of "the English book" on the colonized subjects in his "Signs Taken for Wonders" does not pay much attention to is the distinction between the "wondrous" effects that "the English book" creates on the people gathered under a tree in 1819 outside Delhi and the effect that it does create on the mind of the young Trinidadian Naipaul, what this paper tries to elucidate and illustrate as two different categories of "wonders" (1985, p. 144). In the example of the 1819 Indian people we observe the challenges posed against the



assumed authority of the colonial book as they postpone the occasion for their baptism and decline to conform to the Sacrament:

Anund observed, 'You ought to be BAPTIZED in, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Come to Meerut: there is a Christian Padre there; and he will shew you what you ought to do.' They answered, 'Now we must go home to the harvest; but, as we mean to meet once a year, perhaps the next year we may come to Meerut.'... I explained to them the nature of the Sacrament and of Baptism; in answer to which, they replied, 'We are willing to be baptized, but we will never take the Sacrament. To all the other customs of Christians we are willing to conform, but not to the Sacrament, because the Europeans eat cow's flesh, and this will never do for us.' (Bhabha, *Signs Taken for Wonders*, 1985, p. 146)

Their response is significant since they actively incorporate their own beliefs and ideas into the belief system introduced by Anund, the representative of the European religious discourse; they appropriate that part of the system which they recognize as congruent or in line with their conception of the book and decline to conform to that part which is in contrast with their own traditional belief system in which eating cow's flesh is forbidden. What is significant for our understandings of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized subjects in this scene is that they ground their attack against the authorized reading of Christianity conferred to them through the medium of a Christian priest based on sacrilegious nature of Europeans culinary habits. In other words, these people are thinking, acting and working based on the cultural principles in which they are born into, lived and experienced, the cultural precepts which have become a kind of second nature to them through constant practice in their daily activities and throughout their whole lives till the present times, the lives which were intact from the foreign religious attacks of Europeans. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe them being able to pinpoint the divergences of the new religious system with that of their own and mount a critique of people whose practices are not convergent with that of their own; their mental framework is completely formed and shaped based on their traditional principles and practices and actively borders its gates against any ritual, belief, custom or practice which is incongruent with that mentality. We call this active reaction to colonial cultural discourse or "the emblem of the English

book" the first species of "wonders" that Bhabha talks about (*Signs Taken for Wonders*, 1985, p. 144).

The other species of "wonders" is the one that Bhabha also observes in Naipaulean response to the emblem of western cultural discourse but does not differentiate it from the first one. Bhabha recounts Naipaul's own experience of encounter with Joseph Conrad to exemplify his point:

To be a colonial was to know a kind of security; it was to inhabit a fixed world. And I suppose that in my fantasy I had seen myself coming to England as to some purely literary region, where, untrammled by the accidents of history or background, I could make a romantic career for myself as a writer. But in the new world I felt that ground move below me.... Conrad ... had been everywhere before me. Not as a man with a cause, but a man offering ... a vision of the world's half-made societies ... where always 'something inherent in the necessities of successful action ... carried with it the moral degradation of the idea.' Dismal but deeply felt: a kind of truth and half a consolation. (Bhabha, *TLC*, 1994, p. 118)

Here, Bhabha finds the same harrowing scenario of "the emblem of the English book" acted out on the mind of young Trinidadian Naipaul (1985, p. 144); on discovery of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* well educated Naipaul (living in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) is stricken by the same sense of "wonders" that has engrossed the Hindu undereducated community who had gathered under woods outside New Delhi, nearly more than a century ago in 1819. The difference between the Indian drama and the Naipaulean version is that the one depicts the scenario acted out in the religious scene while the other is acted out on the literary field (the sense of "wonders" which brings with itself "the moral degradation of" Naipaul's dream of becoming an original "writer"). According to Bhabha, this sense of "wonders" forms the values of Naipaulean works:

The values that such a perspective generates for his own work, and for the once colonized world it chooses to represent and evaluate, are visible in the *hideous panorama* (emphasis mine) that some of his titles provide: *The Loss of El Dorado*, *The Mimic Men*, *An Area of Darkness*, *A*

*Wounded Civilization, The Overcrowded Barracoon.* (1985, p. 149)

The sense of "wonders" that Bhabha finds present in the scenes of colonial encounter across the world, whether it is Africa, Asia or Caribbean Islands\_ that has shaped and given form to "the values" of Naipaul's vision of the literary world reflected in the titles of his works-is the politics of colonial cultural discourse to impose and inscribe its own spatial and temporal politics of cultural identity onto the colonized subjectivities and, in this way, to implicate them within the (con)text of values defined by colonizers. The (con)text which is established based on the colonial logic of the existence of the binary opposition between the colonizer/colonized, the logic that has sifted deep into the mind of Naipaul to the extent that even the titles of all his works are mirroring the reflection of his wonderment. This is what we call the second species of "wonders" "the English book" effects on the colonized people which is wholeheartedly at variance with the first type of "wonders" we observed in the case of gathered Indian people. This further differentiates the Indian drama with that of the Naipaulian one. The colonial subject in this version is passive recipient of the colonial cultural discourse and is unable to mount his own readings of the western cultural discourse because he observes his native culture through the mental framework provided in "the English book". Naipaul's *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds* illustrates the process of implication of the colonial subjects with the second type of "wonders", the procedure which involves several socio-cultural institutions such as educational system, religion and family, for instance.

### 3. Discussion

At the end of *Magic Seeds*, Willie Somerset Chandran seeks connections in England to get out of prison. And, the political campaign run on his behalf on the English newspapers as "the pioneer of modern Indian writing" makes him subject to "the terms of special amnesty" (Naipaul, 2004, p. 168). Willie leaves for London and takes refuge in a conservative life of an employee working in an Architecture magazine, exiled forever from his country or culture, not wishing to go back to his past life as a guerrilla in far off forests of India, as a husband to his Portuguese-African Anna in Africa, or as a son to his parents at home and his father's ashram. Having no emotional or any other form of attachment

to none of these people or places he falls into a state of "restlessness and rootlessness" (2007, p. 5). This paper argues that the roots of such strange fragmented familial, religious, cultural or emotional experience of identity which dislocates, displaces and deracinates individuals from their homes transforming them into wanderers across the international scenes or metropolitan centers lie in the second sense of Bhabhaite "wonders" that possess their soul in their encounter with "the emblem of the English Book", the sense that effects a different form of response from the colonized subjects. There is a haven of difference between actively interpreting and rejecting Indians who easily postpone the time to be Baptized on the excuses that it is the season of work and they have to go back home and, at the same time, announce their disagreement with the European interpretation of Sacrament and decline to accept this part of Christianity for its incongruity with their own traditional beliefs and Willie Chandran's response who has lost all his ties with his historical, cultural, social, geographical and even familial roots completely (Bhabha, *Signs Taken for Wonders*, 1985, p. 144).

But, what are the reasons behind the monolithic reign of colonial narratives of identity in the mind of Willie? Or how colonizers were able to inscribe their own cultural discourse and their own mentality or their own narratives of identity onto the mind and imagination of Willie? Or, as Sarojini addresses Willie, "Why you have lived as you have lived" (Naipaul, *Magic Seeds*, 2004, p. 10). A possible answer to such questions can be a temporal one: the length of exposure to alien culture which in the case of Willie, this element, nearly, covers the expanse of all his childhood and youth life. Unfortunately, the process of Willie's alienation with his own cultural discourse does not stop at an early stage and is not limited to missionary school. Later, he is transported to another spatial and temporal location by the magic of scholarship scheme. He continues his studies in English at a college in London. There, he starts to excavate the historical archives of colonial cultural discourse and rewrite the entire history of his family and to some extent (if we use his newly acquired vocabulary), the "subcontinent" anew (Naipaul, *Half a Life*, 2001, p. 39).

The other possible reason may be the absence of formal education in local cultural tradition. If we pay attention to the definition of a literate person as the one who



is able to read and write, we will notice the significance of education at school. It is a place that a person learns to read and write. Therefore, he/she is able to read and write in the medium that he is taught. He/she is able to read the texts written in that language. And, even more vital or lethal skill than reading seems to be the writing skill; one has to think in language that he is able to write if he wants to make a sensible piece of writing; to be able to write a sentence one has to re-think and re-think a sentence, a concept to find the proper form of expression. This is exactly what Willie does to write his composition pieces:

Willie thought in his head, in English, "He is not only a fraud, but a coward." The sentence didn't sound right; there was a break in the logic somewhere. So he did it over. "Not only is he a fraud, but he is also a coward." The inversion in the beginning of the sentence worried him, and the "but" seemed odd, and the "also." And then, on the way back to the Canadian mission school, the grammatical fussiness of his composition class took over. He tried out other versions of the sentence in his head... (Naipaul, *Half a Life*, 2001, p. 30)

The essays exercise his mind in the grammar of the English language, in word meanings, connotations, soundings and rhythms and in the "logic" of the words. In short, writing inculcated every aspect of language in the mind of the learner. As we observe here, Willie plays in his mind with but, not and also of his English sentences.

The language of missionary school is English; the curricula is determined by missionary fathers. Consequently, pupils learn to read and write in English. The culture imparted in the course of missionary education is English culture, alien to that of pupils because language is a medium of culture (Edward Sapir, 1985, p. 162). Willie and other students learn to read and write; they are literate, educated but not able to read, write in their mother tongue, not literate in their own language. They are illiterate literates who are not able to read and write in Indian, to think about the structure of their Indian sentences; they are trained and educated in a foreign cultural discourse. The missionary school introduces an alien element into the lives of the innocent, ignorant children who are caught young in the web of colonial cultural machinery (Gandhi, 2013, p. 56). The school intrudes and misconnects pupils to an alien cultural discourse rather than their textual cultural discourse. A fault, a break and a disruption in the line of textual cultural heritage transformation occurs; the

traditional cultural heritage is, no longer, able to inculcate the minds of its young since they have lost their touch with it in the context of foreign educational system. And, as a result, the young or the next generation is unable to use local cultural texts let alone producing new texts in their culture. The result is clear: gradual alienation of children from their culture which forms the social aspect of their identity.

The other influential determiner in Willie's complete alienation and engrossment or wonderment with colonial culture is his family. Family as a social institution plays a significant role in inculcating, forming and giving shape and direction to the cultural traits of its offspring. For instance, if we observe the portraits of families in novels like *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, we can observe characters growing within the context of their families, especially the Okonkwo family, who are the main characters of the story. The children, both boys and girls are depicted forming the structure of their belief system unconsciously as they practice their traditions, customs and beliefs in their daily activities; in a scene we find Okonkwo worrying about his son's laziness and asking the counsel of his friend Obierika. He is simply told that Nwoye is still too young. In fact, Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* portrays the dignity of traditional Igbo family life (Rhoads, 1993, p. 63). But, Naipaul's picture of Indian family is grotesque and ludicrous. We find out that Chandran family has been based not on tradition but on a misuse of the tradition, as Mr. Chandran relates the story of his marriage to his son Willie. Being a high caste, Mr. Chandran is not allowed to marry a low caste daughter but in a ludicrous, silly act he announces that he has married a low caste girl, the announcement which is not true in fact since he has not really married the girl according to the customs of the day in a temple. He is only keeping her for some time paying for her expenses. This inter-caste fake marriage makes the identity of this family and its offspring ambivalent. Children of this family belong to none of the castes and as a consequence, there is no hope for them, especially for the female ones, to have a chance of marriage within the Indian traditional marriage system. Later in his life, Mr. Chandran time and times again regrets his marriage to a low caste girl calling it a silly act. Thus, Chandran family is more a caricature of real

Indian family, a negative portrait of marriage customs and family relations of Indian society. In consequence, it is more a passive agent unable to play its customary part in seeding traditional Indian cultural discourse on its children's souls.

The case of Willie's and Sarojini's education is one such example of passivity in Chandran family, especially from the head of the family. Mrs. Chandran decides to send her children to mission school. She herself had been to mission school in her childhood and had been wondered by "the emblem of the English book" or Euro-Christian principles of the place. The narrator clearly states that "it was her wish that her children should go there" Willie Chandran's mother had been wondered in a childish way (Naipaul, *Half a Life*, 2001, p. 28). Mr. Chandran is well-aware of what the mission fathers doing at mission school and seems to be unhappy with the decision. "They will turn you into a little monkey and send you right back here to work with your mother's family and the other backwards. You are a fool." (Naipaul, *Half a Life*, 2001, p. 31). But, he does not interfere and plays the role of a passive spectator for the most part till the very last moment that he fears his son's hatred of himself.

Hating one's father! It is not a normal customary feeling that is expected to exist among the members of a family, especially between a children and their parents. In a modern industrialized life in which family ties have strained a lot, observing such break in emotional ties between parent-child relationships may not be much unexpected. But, in a traditional Indian family it seems to be more an oddity. Or, maybe this detestation has psychological reasons like the one Freud calls, the Oedipus Complex, a kind of rivalry between Willie and his father for the mother. Therefore, it is compulsory to find the roots of such hatred that have risen to the degree of hostility and abhorrence in Willie's case.

As the story progresses in *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*, it is unraveled that missionary education has dire consequences on Willie's conception of his cultural identity. Hence, the first step on Willie's road to cultural damnation is taken by his mother's wish to send him to mission school, to be inculcated by the cultural norms taught at mission school. The norms which disregarded caste rules, the rules which were heavily observed by other

schools. But the result does not turn out as she wishes:

But gradually as he grew up he understood more about the mission school and its position in the state. He understood more about the pupils in the school. He understood that to go to the mission school was to be branded, and he began to look at his mother from more and more of a distance. The more successful he became at school—and he was better than his fellows—the greater that distance grew. (Naipaul, *Half a Life*, 2001, p. 29)

As the time goes by, Willie understands that only backwards who are not allowed to other schools go to mission school. And he begins to lose his love of his mother and starts to hate her for her backward caste, exactly 180 degrees in contrast with what his mother had expected to happen.

Mission school not only makes Willie hate his mother but also it makes him conscious of his father's position and, in consequence, he grows an aversion of his father, too. When teachers ask pupils "What does your father do?" "Willie wonders ... what to say about his father's business" and they laugh at his answer (Naipaul, *Half a Life*, 2001, p. 29). From that day on, he despised his father. This hatred lives with him to the last; for instance, being a few miles away, Willie hears his father living his last days in his deathbed. But, he does not go to see him for the one last time. To cut the long story short, Willie hated his parents for the kind of "half and half" life they had given him, one by being a backward and the other by being an imposter (Naipaul, *Half a Life*, 2001, p. 71). Therefore, bankrupt emotional ties further alienate Willie Chandran from his culture. As a fundamental structure of society, it is one of the default functions of families to transfer cultural heritage across generations. A family of strained emotional ties between parents themselves and between parents and children is an inopportune space for such functional aspects being fulfilled properly.

Religion is another critical determiner of cultural identity. Religion plays a significant role in the formation of social structures. Religion gives shape, form and meaning to the structure of customs, beliefs and practices of both societies and individuals. As a result, introduction of any foreign ingredients into the religious beliefs of individuals will be of inevitable consequences for their cultural identity. That is the logic behind the fact that religious missionaries are among the



first to arrive a colony (Kipp, 1990, p. 14); conversion to Christianity was the main objective of these missionary societies, as we have seen above in the example related by Homi Bhabha from Indian missionaries register books. Also, mission school, an educational wing of missionary societies, plays a critical role in the formation of Willie Chandran's identity. The school is able to inscribe in his mind the desire to become a missionary going around the world to do mission work. There are many instances in *Half a Life* that depicts Willie's wish to be a missionary. Blow, he is talking to his parents:

Willie said, "I want to go to Canada."

His father said, "For me it's been a life of sacrifice. I have earned no fortune. I can send you to Benares or Bombay or Calcutta or even Delhi. But I can't send you to Canada."

"The fathers will send me."

"Your mother has put this low idea in your head. Why would the fathers want to send you to Canada?"

"They will make me a missionary."

The mission school he is studying at is Canadian, that's why he has developed a wish to go to Canada. But, quite unexpectedly, nearly at the end of his mission school period, Willie instigated by a photo in a missionary magazine and feeling called upon in the name of his local religion leaves the school burying his ambition to become a missionary.

But, there are complications in the case of Willie's religious identity. His father is a Brahmin; as we have learned above, his mother is a backward with no religion, who has gone to mission school and who sends her children there, too. Consequently, Willie is exposed to a Christian milieu. He learns about Christianity. His family or society expects him to be a Brahmin. His mission school period becomes a success story for missionary fathers who are able to direct his attention to Christianity. But, at a critical moment Willie grows aversions towards missionary fathers and their objectives. He leaves the school unfinished in a religious anger. At this point in his life, Willie seems to be more inclined to Hindu religion (and if he had stayed in India he may have formed stronger ties with Hinduism). But, his father, Mr. Chandran manages to send him on scholarship to England to follow his studies in a Victorian college. There, Willie develops a new vision of the world and its workings; he starts to modify every piece

and bit of his family history and above all his mother's religious identity in accordance with the prevalent colonial narratives of the spatio-temporal location of his stay, London. But, even in his fictitious narratives of identity, Willie leaves his religious identity unclear. As the story unfolds the later sections of his life in *Half a Life* and, later in *Magic Seeds* we do not observe any religious feelings, practices, beliefs or customs being stated or performed by him. In *Magic Seeds* we observe Willie practicing or working in the interests of a materialistic view of life which renounces religion as the "opium of the people" (Karl Marx, 1844, p. 27). For Marx economic relations forms the basis of society. Thus, though mission school and college life are not able to convert Willie to Christianity, they succeed in divesting his religious identity, making him a secular wanderer around the world. In other words, in the case of Willie Chandran, the cultural or religious discourse of colonialism or "the emblem of the English book" is able to introduce a break or a fault in the line of the contiguity of religious faith from a generation to the next, by transporting, dislocating and displacing the colonial subject from the spatiality and temporality where its politics writ over the structure of ideas and beliefs of its subjects the Hindu religious politics. In consequence, it is the wondrous of "the English book" or colonial cultural discourse that in his newly formed conception of the world, Willie has no space or time to devote to what is called religion. This is the other aspect of the plight that implicates the colonized subjectivities in their journey towards their wondered cultural identity.

Consciousness of diverging points between cultural traditions is imparted or, better to say, inscribed into and onto the minds of those who have been thoroughly fed with the milk of colonial cultural discourse coming from the bosoms of its institutions like missionary schools and colleges. The mere knowledge of cultural differences may not be harmful or harm any of the cultures involved. What makes the nature of knowledge propagated by colonial institutions problematic is the character of the relations between western culture and local culture that is imparted together with the knowledge of it. Or, to put it in other words, the objective of colonial cultural institutions is not to serve for the dignified ideal of extending the cause of knowledge and wisdom but to inculcate the philosophy

and the logic upon which they have been founded and run, the binary logic of oppositionality and the existence of conflictual, antagonistic, either/or and not both/and relations between the two cultures involved. Furthermore, they are working to build or to define the politics of this inimical configuration in hegemonic terms of superiority/inferiority, colonizer/colonized, subject/object, male/female, masculine/feminine, white/non-white, representative/represented, to name but a few, in which the first side of the binary is identified as the dominator, the authority and the other side is recognized as the dominated, the Other. Such a negative conception of the association between the two poles, cultures in not possible without thinking of the identity of one's culture in essentialist politics which favors, race, ethnicity and/or the religion of one over the other. Whether it is the colonizer or the colonized, essentialism from both poles of the colonial binary can be interpreted as the politics of identity which is doomed to failure. V. S. Naipaul in the story of Chandran family history provide us with the examples of what might be called essentialist politics of identity in the example of Willie Somerset Chandran in *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*. Willie's hatred of both his father and mother has its roots in the essentialistic cultural discourse of identity which he has been taught at school. As we have already stated, Willie's mother sends her children to mission school since they treat all children equal in that place, the aspect of the mission school that she favors above all. But, her gain in sending her Willie to mission fathers is hatred and detestation, not from the differences that exist between the high and low castes in Indian community, but, quite contrastingly from the low caste of his mother and the traditions upon which his father's source of income depends on. In other words, mission education has made him believe in the inferiority of his traditions, customs and in short his culture. It has shaped the frame of Willie's mind based on the essentialistic, binaristic logic that colonialism depends upon, that is the binary logic of colonialism, the belief in the existence of an essential distinction between cultures. Another example of seeding such a faith in the binary logic of colonialism comes to the fore when Willie arrives in London to follow his studies. As a result of London milieu and his college education, he starts to refashion his identity anew and produce a fake version of his family history and

religio-cultural identity which is convergent and commensurate – or to use Said's terminology, is consistent – with the Orientalist discourse of metropolitan milieu of London (Said, *Orientalism*, 2006, p. 5).

To use Bhabhaite terminology in Willie's case, colonial education poisons his mind with "the emblem of the English book", forcing him to take it as the site of "wonders" through framing his mind by its cultural discourse (Signs Taken for Wonders, 1985, p. 144). His wonderment falls into the second species of "wonders" in over division of the types of "wonders" since as the story advances from his childhood to his late twenties in *Half a Life* and, later, to his middle aged and old life in *Magic Seeds*, he is unable to display any form of that actively rejecting personality that we have observed among the group of Indians gathered under a tree outside Delhi nearly a century before him. Naipaul excellently depicts the experiences that a subjectivity may undergo to find such a wondered configuration of identity, as the second sense of the word applies. It is a process. Willie's wonderment with the western culture or his estrangement from his own roots began by his introduction into the colonial cultural discourse during his missionary education at home, the experience which eventually left deep scars on the face of his cultural identity as it was followed by his entrance into the Victorian (con)text of college education on scholarship in London. Therefore, colonial education acted as a main determiner of his wondered cultural identity throughout his life; the force of this factor in the formation of his identity is to the extent that later, completely overshadowed the impact of his culture on his identity (though not at the end of his missionary education at home).

#### 4. Conclusion

Naipaul's represented, developed, expanded and imagined view in the stage of the works adopted as the (con)texts of this study, namely *Half a Life* and *Magic Seeds*, is a negative, dark, and pessimistic one; one which rests mainly on the caliginous aspects of and representations of colonized socio-cultural structure; and, one which rests mainly on the discourse of identity defined, formed, constructed, worked upon and shaped to a great extent, mainly and successfully by colonial discourse through its institutional axes of moral and material progress such as cultural, mostly, in the forms of various educational institutions like schools and universities and religious,





mostly, in the forms of churches and missionaries. Besides, the ingredients of social structure in colonial society like family and religion are essential determiners in the formation of one's own cultural identity or in bestowing the milieu for foreign cultural structure to work its way through the wonderment of colonized subjects in the second sense of the word, one which we observed in Willie Chandran's case, passive acceptance of alien cultural discourse as one's native habitat for identity. The relation between the influential factors on the formation of Willie's cultural identity found in the context of this study to that of psychological ones can provide fruitful result to understand the nature of colonial cultural discourse that has remained to be explored. It seems that the "wonders" effected in the mind of Naipaul is inscribed deeply into his subjectivity that even the passage of long periods of time cannot effect his worldview. His portrayals of colonized characters in his latest novels has remained a dark and caliginous one. The outside for such a wondered vision of colonial world can have much in common with what we have found in the workings of colonial machinery in this study.

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