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Fluctuation of Identity in Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Fluctuation of Identity in Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Durga Bahadur Khatri has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Durga Bahadur Khatri has completed his thesis entitled "Fluctuation of Identity in Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from November, 2010 to August, 2011 A.D. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Abstract

Doris Lessing's novel *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* proginates the fluctuational identity of the persons as it narrativizes the protagonist Charles Watkins' identities on the basis of his class, gender, race, culture, ethnicity, colonial and postcolonial, nationality, imperialism and so on. With such diversified sense of the determinants of identity which attempt for the iconic identity; Lessing, in this novel, attempts to disclose the complex present situation where identity is formed in relation to general to specific and specific to general focalizing the shift in identity that harmonizes with the changable identity. Furthermore, heterogeneous nomenclature, as the protagonist is named as Jason, Jonah, Odysseus, Crafty, Crystal and so on; focuses on the multiety of identities in relation to complex identity that senses for the Multiple identity of the protagonist in this novel.

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I. Introduction to Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* as a *Poststructuralist Fiction*

This research paper basically lays its focus on Doris Lessing's well read book, *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, published in 1971 at the first time in the United Kingdom, to prove how Lessing tacitly exposes and expresses the fluidity and fluctuation of identity and subjectivity. The research attempts to show the flux identity of the characters and sharp indictment of the clouds of suspicion, representation and amalgamation of perspectives, multiple meanings and identities. The identity of the protagonist, Charles Watkins, is in the process of the constant flux. A variety of socio-political, cultural and contextual movements engaged in complex articulatory practices are involved in the process of change of identity which is still fluid, incomplete and open to continual transformation. The identity is an issue of study into the ethnic, class, gender, race, sexuality, psychology, geography, nationality, media, sub-culture and so on.

Identity is never universal and fixed but the production of discourse that regulates it in its context. Identity is constituted by representation rather than found within certain socio-cultural background. This text represents all the prevailing social practices and the artifacts. Identities are the products of discourses and regulate the individual's worldly perceptions. We become concerned with the formation of identity in a variety of social and political movements engaged in complex articulatory practices. Identity is a product of fragile connections established between the various elements of language and it is also bound by the institutions which are themselves the product of socio-cultural practices. In this backdrop, in the words of Linda Martin Alcoff, "Identity- based political movements have fought throughout the world against oppressions based on race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion,

culture, nationality, disability, age and other forms of socially recognized identity.

But social identities such as these operate differently from class or caste”(2).

Identity is always in the process of formation but never reaches the complete state. The overall emphasis of this research rests on the novel, “*Briefing for a Decent Into Hell*”, the issue of identity formation relating it to poststructuralism, how it is revealed, represented and portrayed in the oblique expression and situation of characters in relation to the dynamic interplay of the contending forces. The novel displays a unique interest on poststructuralism; especially on the issue of identity because it includes the whole range of ideas and factors determining the identity of an individual-the geography, ethnicity, race, religion, class, gender and ideology. Lessing’s idea of identity is culturally and discursively structured and historically contingent which is always in the process of formation. Her attachment of instable identity can be found through her expression:

Each individual of this species is locked up inside his own skull, his own personal experience-or believes that he is-and while a great part of this ethical systems, religions, system, etc; state the unity of life, even the most recent religion, which being the most recent, is the most powerful, called science, has only very fitful and inadequate gleams of insight into the fact that life is One. (Lessing 120-21)

Doris Lessing is an unorthodox writer who has taken on the media, the literary tradition, feminists, politicians and British institutions of higher learning. Therefore, she is considered as one of the best and foremost satirist, imaginary and controversial English writer since the twentieth century. She is multidisciplinary in her career having the fame in novels, short stories, poetry, dramas, non-fictions and autobiography as well. Lessing has been one of the most widely read and influential

British novelist of the second half of the twentieth century. Her works have been translated into many languages and inspired critically attention around the globe. Although she is known as a master of realism, Lessing is often experimental and deliberately fantastic, as shown in her science fictions and her interests are far-ranging from Marxism and global politics to the mystical teaching of Sufism to the small personal voice of the individual. She has been awarded the Somerset Maugham Award, the German Shakespeare prize, the Austrian prize for European literature and the French prix Medicis for foreigners. In 1995, she won the James Tait black prize and a Los Angeles Times Book prize for her 1994 autobiography, *Under My Skin*.

Lessing wrote many novels and stories including *Briefing for a Decent into Hell*. Her fictions are deeply autobiographical, emerging out of her experience in Africa, drawing upon her childhood memories and her serious engagement with politics and social concerns. Lessing has written about the class of cultures, the gross injustices of racial inequality, the struggle among opposing elements within an individual's own personality and the conflict between the individual conscience and collective welfare. With the relocation to London, she published her first novel *The Grass Is Singing* in 1950. With her first novel, Lessing established various themes and styles that would become her trademark. *The Grass Is Singing* is a satire and clearly shows the horrific effects of apartheid and racial prejudice on both the white and colonial rulers and the black people who make up the overwhelming majority of her populations of Southern Africa and its stylistic technique directly opposite to that of a stereotypical detective story, the third person narrator reveals at the outside of *The Grass is Singing* that Mary Turner, the wife of a poor farmer, has been killed by a houseboy, Moses, who confesses to the crime. And it is heavily critical on the western literary tradition.

Lessing's another popular novel, *The Fifth Child*, describes the changes in the happy life of a married couple, Harriet and David Lovatt, which occurs as consequence of the birth of Ben, their fifth child. In *The Fifth Child*, there is found the overtone of feelings of stigmatized identity of Lessing. In the 1970s and 1980s, Lessing began to explore the quasi-mystical insight through new techniques of writing which helps readers to understand the changing assumption of the society. *The Golden Notebook* (1980) is her famous novel that helps to understand her life and her view towards the changing world. In her fiction *The Grass Is Singing* she is clearly showing the horrific effects of apartheid and racial prejudice on both the white colonial rulers and the black people who make up the overwhelming majority of the populations of Southern Africa and a stylistic technique directly opposite to that of a stereotypical detective story. In the same manner, she has written many fictions, non fictions, dramas, poems, autobiographies, diaries and so many other renowned texts with multiple issues evoking the sense of loss, anxiety, subjectivity, individuality, existential struggle, scientific reality, identities and so on.

Identity formation is concerned with the variety of social and political movements engaged in complex articulatory practices identity of the 'self' is based on that of socio-political and cultural aspects. In this backdrop, in the words of Mark J. Smith, "social identities are, therefore, accomplished through struggle; they are fluid and open to continual transformation and they are never complete but unfinished business" (80). According to Stuart Hall, identity is formulated through the ethnicity and so-called the scenario of representation. Identity is complex issue and analysis of the politics of representation that can be found through his expression in his essay:

"The black experience, "as a singular and unifying framework based on the building up of identity across ethnic and cultural difference

between the different communities, became “hegemonic” over other ethnic/racial identities-through the latter did not, of course, disappear. Culturally, this analysis formulated itself in terms of a critique of the way blacks were positioned as the unspoken and invisible “other” of predominantly white aesthetic and cultural discourses. (*New Ethnicities* 90)

Each individual’s identity is formulated through the product of any sorts of discourse and representation, and regulates the individual’s worldly perceptions.

Identities are based on its identity markers; race, gender, sex, ethnicity, nationality, culture, geography, psychology class and so on. Identities are complex articulatory social and political practices and bound by the institutions which are themselves the product of socio-political and cultural practices. According to Cornel West, Identity is now a matter of desire and death:

Identity is fundamentally about desire and death. How you construct your identity is predicted on how you construct desire, and how you conceive of death: desire for recognition, quest for visibility; the sense of being acknowledge; a deep desire for association- what Edward said would call affiliation. It is the longing to belong, a deep, visceral need that most linguistically conscious animals who transact with an environment (that’s us) participate in, and then there is a profound desire for security, for safety for surety. (16)

The novel, *Briefing for a Decent into Hell*, is Lessing’s one of the best novels about the dual world of human beings where she presents her protagonist, Charles Watkins, as the mental disordered person who forgets everything from his mind because of psychological dilemma and wondering around the Waterloo-bridge of England and by

the help of the police, he is admitted in the central Intake Mental Hospital where major three characters are introduced. They are Doctor-X, Doctor-Y and Nurse, and they begin to treat him in order to find out his identity and recover his forgotten memory. They do the treatment differently but he remains as he is before. At the middle part of novel, Watkins's wife, Felicity Watkins, knows about the husband who is admitted in the mental hospital, then, she begins to write a letter to the doctor about her husband's previous behavior when he was at home. When she writes about him that makes doctor easy to find out who he is, his disease, his profession and his activities. After having the conversation on telephone, she reminds the doctor about Charles's friends who sent him letter while he was teaching at Cambridge University at classics. So, doctor took help from his friends and their letter to make him normal condition in order to identify him; who is he? Finally, he is not discovered; who is he? In this context, Lessing hands over this text to the reader to contextualize and find out his identity: who is he?

Regarding this novel, *Briefing for a Decent into Hell*, different critics have different perspectives since its publication. Some critics have paid attention to the thematic analysis of the novel, whereas others have tried to dig out distinctive interpretations like feminism, existentialism, structuralism and so on from different angles. Reviewing the novel from structural standpoint, one of the critics, Joseph Hynes relates the novel with structural life and death. He describes:

Briefing for a Descent Into Hell consists of epigraphs, text and the author's "afterword". The text has no chapter or other formal divisions although there are eight occasions on which dots divide the page and numerous places where additional vertical spacing compels the reader

to make transitions. In the early section, it is clear that no narrative point of view is being developed. (225)

In this theoretical analysis, he expresses his view that the protagonist, Charles Watkins has loosen his identity not because of evolution but because of contradictictionary view of the society. So, Hynes relates Charles Watkins's problem of identity with the problem of time changes. He says, "The narrator knows his own trouble in trying to fix his identity as consciousness" (228). We can find the issue of identity from his expression:

The patient's ramblings, interior and/or exterior, about a sea voyage, a journey on a porpoise or dolphin, and a sort of evolutionary conjoining of earth-air-fire-water-these ramblings mental or spoken in past or present tense are enough to alert us by page 36 that we are involved in a complex problem in our efforts to establish the character's identity. (226)

Similarly, another critic, Douglass Bolling, focuses "the most striking features of briefing is the manner in which theme and structure are so tightly joined. Lessing wishes us to see-to sense powerfully, rather-that the rich strata of the unconscious are everything and the thin layer of ego-identity, very little indeed by comparison" (553).

With this expression, it can be understood that the protagonist, Charles Watkins, is struggling for his identity. Identity ca not be found rather it is the shifting process through the time changes. Charles Watkins is presented a mentally disordered character who has lost his identity, but is against the traditional notion of identity to re-establish the new identity. Though identity, in postmodern sense, is multiple, open-ended and representationable. All the identity makers play the significant role in identity formation. In this backdrop, Lessing also defines the individual self in

relation to ethical system, religious system, power, science, knowledge, and so on. She states, “Each individual of this species is locked up inside his own skull, his own personal experience-or believes that he is-and while a great part of their ethical systems, religious systems, etc.” (Lessing, 120). However, Bolling focuses the structural thematic aspect of the novel. He asserts:

The mutuality at the heart of their relationship is doomed. Violet probably will not find it without Watkins’ continued Presence and Watkins loses his capacity for it after the electric shock treatment. The ‘restored’ protagonist of the last two pages is the profoundly unenlightened creature of a diseased and darkened age, a man unable to “remember” that as Jung says’ “Light is always born of darkness”. (563)

As Douglass Bolling states, this novel has direct connection with its thematic aspects.

Similarly, reviewing another critic, Katherine Fishburn, interprets the novel as science fiction and says:

In this paper, I intend to cast my lot openly with those who lead it as science fiction. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate not to so much that a psychological reading is incorrect but that it does not go far enough tending as it does to obscure or dilute the dialectical relationship between the reader and the text-and understanding of which, I shall argue, is central to Lessing’s intentions in the novel. (48)

Doris Lessing is a powerful writer committed to the lofty goal of changing human consciousness itself with the complex issue of identities in poststructural attitude.

This range is also reflected in her varied narrative forms which include realism, naturalism, science fiction, utopianism and dystopianism, fantasy, fable transcultural

postmodernism, and experimental combination of these. This heterogeneity of themes, techniques and perspectives illustrates Lessing's overriding premise that true identity and substance cannot easily be compartmentalized or assigned fixed labels: existence of identity is always in process, always in flux. However, this novel is still virgin in the sense that none has analyzed this text from the perspective of poststructuralist notion of identities. In this text, the protagonist, Charles Watkins, with multiple identities has its own significance. How is his identity shaped by the discourses created by traditionalists? How can he formulate his identity in contextual flux? Such questions are very significant in this context. But the critics brought here for analysis do not seem to analyze how the social discourses have caused the multiplicity of change of identity. Thus, the present research work proceeds with the contention that changes is a symbolic subject who is culturally and discursively structured and historically contingent. His identity is always in the process of formation and the theoretical modality of this research heavily rests on poststructural perspective. It encompasses the broader perspectives and different theories, of postmodernism like fluidity and multiplicity, discourse, representation, subversion, ideology, etc and tries to establish a vision that the identity is dynamic matter handled by various socio- political, cultural and contextual factors. An individual as a symbolic being is the product of discourse and representation being historically contingent that results in constant flux in the identity and subjectivity.

The whole emphasis of this research rests on the novel, *Briefing for a Decent Into Hell*, the complex issue of identity formation relating it to post structuralism. Generally, the structuralists' desire to describe the invariant structures of literature gave a way to the poststructuralists' emphasis on those dimensions of languages, race, gender, class, sexuality, psychology, culture, ideology, geography, nation, ethnicity,

and social life as a whole which are more concerned with the contingencies, undecidability of meaning and the indeterminacy of the world order. But structuralists focus on those table orders of meaning, Identity and truth. To be more precise, there is a considerable interest in the question of Identity today and there is a considerable confusion around the question of identity; why identities continue to exert power. Everyone seems to agree that social identities such as race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, class, nationality, languages have come to the center of political mobilization since the United States' cultural revolution of the 1960s and many construct recent global conflicts, as centered on differences in fundamental aspects of cultural identity.

However, identity is the combination of social, economic and cultural factors, and not the statements of cultural differences alone that give to challenge the dominant group changing meanings of identity and their transcendence of cultural boundaries have forced people to adopt various majors to create multiple identities. Hybridity also demands temporary stabilization of cultural categories but some capable ones have been competent enough to create multiple identities. Therefore, the researcher attempts to show the multiple meanings and identities from the perspective of post structuralism. Identity is never reaches in its complete state rather it is in the process of formation. In this sense too, identity is not fixed, singular and universal one but it is flux, fluid, multiple and changeable along a discourse and its representation.

This dissertation has been divided into three different chapters to alleviate the study of identity with respect to the central characters. The first chapters include the general introduction to the study and it also presents the hypothesis, elaboration of the statement of problem against the backdrop of different critics' commentaries on the

novel relating the theoretical tool of the research; post structuralism, with Nietzsche, Derrida, Foucault, Behavior, Butler and so many post structuralist theorists in reference. The second chapter presents an extensive textual analysis to reveal how the novel documents the instances of discourse, representation, situatedness, contingencies and the identity formation of the central character in restrictive socio-political, cultural, national and ethnic boundaries. The third chapter concludes the research with a brief recounting observation of the work affirming the hypothesis. Finally, all the chapters will attempt to resolve around the poststructural make up of the characters in the society with respect to the rules, norms and values and system, etc.

II. Fluctuation of Identity in *Briefing for Decent Into Hell*

Identities are constituted by means of representation and production of discourses. Identities are created in socio-political, cultural, ideological, racial, national, sexual, gender and structural position, caste and so on. Identity is not a matter of individual choice; rather it is the representation and product of discourses. Identity is never universal rather it is a dynamic interchange of beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, sentiments and any state of consciousness. In this sense, identity is constituted by discourses and its representation of particular conditions, class structure, politics, ideology and power relations in the courses of history. Discourse itself involves a change; therefore identity is fluid, open to continual transformation, changeable and incomplete. Identity is formed because of class, gender and sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, caste and subculture, knowledge and ideology, nationality and geography, socio-political, structural position, psychology, normal and abnormal and so on. In this backdrop, Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* is based on the issue of identity which is multiple, changeable, flux, contingent and fluid. It also focuses on the dialectics between normal and abnormal. However, there are other issues like class, nationality, gender, sex, race, ethnicity, culture, ideology, structural, colonial, psychological, etc; that explicitly or implicitly attempt to mark the identity of protagonist which are the main concern in this research. This research partially supports the idea of identity that is culturally and historically contingent, a matter of representation.

Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* is one of the imaginative work of art which is based on identity formation. In this novel, an immigrant's experiences of discrimination and ignorance cause alienation, multiplicity of identity and identity crises are realistically represented. Identity is not the fixed entity rather it is the

product of class consciousness. Class consciousness is one of the prominent markers of the identity. Class is categorized into two groups; bourgeoisie and proletariat. The class itself is changeable along struggle class is hegemonic structure which can be questioned and earned by its struggle of class consciousness. As the class changes, the identity of the individual and group changes. The class consciousness is the false notion of consciousness of the society which is determined by bourgeoisie who have the power and authority in the society. On this cognitive base, the protagonist of the novel, *Briefing for a Decent Into Hell*, Charles Watkins is poor and classless. Therefore, the protagonist is wandering around the Waterloo bridge and arrested by the police who have the power and authority; Police, they admitted him in Central Intake hospital for better treatment and identify him as; Patient was well dressed but had not changed his clothes for some time. He did not seem very hungry or thirsty. He was wearing trousers and a sweater, but he had no paper or wallet or money or marks of identity (11).

These above lines claim that the protagonist of the novel has lost his identity not because of mental retirement but because of socio-political situation. The protagonist is poor. His identity is defined by the police while admitting him in Central Intake hospital in London. These lines also reflect the searching identity of the protagonist. He has lost his identity because of bourgeoisie notion of false consciousness and defined as abnormal person. But he is not a disabled rather he is diseased by the society. In this regard, the identity of the protagonist is socially constructed which is in process but never reaches in its completeness. Though the identity of the protagonist is in flux, changeable, incomplete state of mind and shifting process.

Along with the Derridian deconstruction, there has been a remarkable shift in the world view regarding the notion of existence as unified, singular, coherent meaning, truth, self, identity and subjectivity. Deconstruction paved the way for the progress of poststructuralism and cultural criticisms. Derrida was highly influenced by the Heideggerian concept of “Ontology” which questioned the concept of transcendental knowledge and subjectivity. In the same line, Friedrich Nietzsche was another foremost influencing figure for Derrida. Derridian concept of “skepticism”, perspectivism and the reversal of binaries are more Nietzschean which question the concept of knowledge and identity that are supposed to be absolute, unquestionable, trustworthy, complete, pure and perfect. Though the concept of “skepticism” further questions the transparency of language, meaning and truth gained through language as “mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms” (Nietzsche, 636). Nietzsche further claims that any meaning, identity and truth is a sum of human relation which become “poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned and after long usage seems to a nation fixed, canonic and binding, truths are illusions”(636).

Further, in the improvement of poststructuralist nation, Nietzsche’s declaration of the “Death of the God” and his question on ultimate truth signifies the origin of many “origins”, the multiplicity of identity which was a landmark events that puts all the stable categories such as truth and knowledge, coherence, “identity” and “origin” under question thereby poststructuralism and deconstruction reject any fixity, singularity and ultimateness. While talking about the poststructuralism as a theoretical tool, Alex Thompson makes the point that deconstruction always puts question mark on singularity and existence of everything cannot be fixed rather it becomes dynamic and fluctuating. Alex Thompson argues:

Deconstruction is very interested in the ways in which Identity is never simply complete or given but it is the product of these kinds of decisions and assumptions. Rather than seeing the world in terms of specific, fixed and concrete entities, deconstruction sees it in terms of dynamic process of differentiation [...] the identity of written or verbal signs- that which allows them to be repeated used and understand in new context to mean things quite different from what originally intended by them. (300)

Identity is complex and transforming from one to many and many to one because of contextual factors. Each individual's identity is merely the structurally structured in worldly perception. The identity of the protagonist is contingent, changeable and incomplete on its contextual flux. This result can be seen the conversational parts of the major characters: Doctor- X, Doctor-Y, Nurse and he himself. When the novel begins, there is the conversation between Doctors, Nurse and Protagonist himself. In its beginning, Doctor Y asks his name and the protagonist replies his name; Jason (14). Similarly, the conversation goes on but the protagonist tells his different identity like Jonah (14), Odysseus (29), Crafty (29), Crystal (145), etc; In this backdrop, the identity of the protagonist is changeable and contingent. Class of the individual and society is not fixed and it is changeable with its situations. As the class changes, the identity of the individual too, changes. Therefore, the identity is not fixed and singular but it is multiple and ever changing process. Though the protagonist says, "Things aren't what they seem" (18).

Social class is one of the determining factors of an identity. According to E.J. Hobsbawm's view, Marx used the term "class" in two different senses-means of production and secondly, exploiters and exploited for purely economic reasons. In

E.P Thompson's word, class is "a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness" (136). Thompson claims that class is a historical phenomena but it is not as "structure" and "category", because it is something which in fact happens in human relationship and concerned with methodology, to the exclusion of the examination of a single real class situation in a real historical context. He further informed us as;

Classes are based on the differences in legitimate power associated
 With certain positions, i.e. on the structure of social roles with respect
 to their authority expectation [...] An individual becomes a member
 of a social role relevant from the point of view of authority [...] He
 belongs to a class because he occupies a position in a social
 organization; i.e. class membership is derived from the incumbency of
 a social role. (137)

The political dimension of a consciousness, class and organization are rapidly changing class is dynamic and changeable which changes in its historical context. Identities are formed by means of class, are also changeable. Thus, with historical context, the concept of the class and class consciousness is shifting.

The political dimensions of class consciousness and especially the relation between members of the class and organizations are therefore rapidly changing as the identity of the individual changes. Similarly, class is the determining factor of the identity. If the protagonist of the novel is from higher class family, his identity is formed as the class formed. Politically and culturally, the protagonist is powerless and non-authorative. So his identity is formed as a poor and mentally disordered person. In order to identify him, Doctor Y suggests as:

Nothing from police, No reports of any small boats, Yachts or swimmers unaccounted for. Patient continues talking aloud, singing, swinging back and forth in bed. He is excessively fatigued. Tomorrow: Sodium Amytal. I suggest a week's narcosis. (13)

These lines also support the issue of identity which can be formulated as an abnormal person. Here the identity of the protagonist is not well defined: Who is he? And he is not mentally disordered person but he is made so by the doctor in order to formulate his identity as a mad person. This is to say, the identity of the protagonist is formed by the doctors which is in flux in this context.

The political dimension of a consciousness, class and organization are rapidly changing class is dynamic and changeable which changes in its historical context. Identities are formed by means of class, are also changeable. Thus, with historical context, the concept of the class and class consciousness is shifting.

The essential feminist scholar, Simone de Beauvoir, strongly opposes the traditional ideas of the gender construction and roles given to them are largely based on the “myths” and roles “politics”. She believes that the gender is a social construction. In this sense, she seems to be what John Boswell calls “nominalist”. He does not believe on the universality of any roles given to the gender biasly constructed on the social grounds. Though, women are defined by males. The patriarchal ideology defines women as “fragile creature”, “mystery” and gender construction provides the better roles responsibilities to the males than females. So, no position is usually held absolutely but political unexpected result hinders everything. So, Simone de Beauvoir asserts that the term “masculine” is used systematically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers:

In actually the relation of two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and neutral, as is indicated by the common use of 'man' to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limited criteria, without reciprocity [...] A man is the right in being a man, it is the women who is in the wrong. (Beauvoir, 150)

Gender and sexual identity is not a universal category. One of the revolutions in the study of history in the twentieth century is the "minority history", the effort to recover the histories of the groups previously out looked from mainstream historiography. Minority history has provoked predictable skepticism on the part of the traditional historians. Particularly, political struggles have seriously subverted the issue of gender and identity. New historians believe that the gender category exists arbitrarily as the names for things that have categorical force because human agree to use them in certain ways. According to John Boswell, two traditional sides in this controversy are called "the problem of Universal" or "realists" and "nominalist". Therefore, he says:

Realists consider categories to be the footprints or reality ("Universal"). They exist because human perceive a real order in the Universe and name it [...]. Most modern philosophy and language theory is essentially nominalists, and even more theoretical sciences are nominalist to some degree. In biology, for example, taxonomists disagree strongly about whether they are discovering (realists) or inventing (nominalists) distinctions among phyla, genera, species etc. (212-13)

Boswell further highlights that “the Universals” in this case are categories of sexual performance or orientation. Nominalists (“Social constructionists” in the current debate) in the matter aver that categories of sexual performance and behaviors are “created by humans and human societies” (Boswell, 213).

The gender construction is largely based on myth and it is arbitrarily constructed by physical appearance and thus it is an imaginary one not real and natural. Gender is constructed through the network of social and political relations that needs to be reinterpreted. Therefore, gender and sexuality is also an unstable category and the identity is formed but it cannot remain stable, unchangeable and universal one. Similarly, Judith Butler, a noted feminist critic, claims that the traditional notion of gender confers a false sense of legitimacy and universality to a culturally specific and culturally oppressive version of gender identity. She claims as:

Gender as a “factor” or a “dimension” of an analysis, it is also applied to embodied persons as “a mark” of biological, linguistic, and/or cultural difference [...] Some feminist theorists claim that gender is “a relation”, indeed, a set of relations, and not an individual attribute. (13)

Judith Butler also opines that it is not a fixed category and also suggests that gender is not only the matter of socio-cultural construct but a psychological as well. So, the quality of females exists within a man and the masculine qualities prevail within a woman. Therefore, gender bears in itself a subversive quality.

Similarly, gender is another important and significant identity marker of the protagonist in the novel. The protagonist being the male does not have his own dignified identity rather identity is in flux in its gender role. Gender refers to the role and responsibility of an individual but here, gender does not function properly because he is psychologically disordered because of societal demarcation of normalcy

and abnormality. The protagonist, Charles Watkins, does not have his identity in the beginning of the novel. He is defined by the police at the time of admission in Central Intake hospital in London. Changes in identity of the protagonist happen because of socio-political scenario. In the earlier part of the novel, he is defined as the abnormal person but in the later part of it, he gradually and serially develops his identity as the context determines. This claim can be seen in these lines of the novel;

My mind was the fact of the mind, like cell sin a honeycomb. Letting my mind lie dark there, quiescent, a mirror for light, I could feel, or sense, or recognize, a pulse of individuality that I had known once as poor [...]. Each of these people had formed in their lives, mere continuously forming in every breath they took, and though this web, these webs, ran a finer beat, as water ran everywhere in the stone city through channels cut or built in rock by men who were able to grade the lift or the fall of the earth. (96-97)

These lines state that each individual identity is socially constructed which is not complete in its state and single one but it is changeable and in flux in its needs and demand. The identity of an individual is formed in relation to collective identities like cells in a honeycomb. When the identity is in crisis, an individual starts to feel sense and recognize his individuality. In the same manner, the protagonist has been feeling his absent identity in the society because of poverty and powerlessness. His identity is formed by the society and continuously forming in every breath they took. Therefore, the identity of the protagonist is flux, continual, changeable and contingent. No identity is fixed and even remains the same. Identity itself is structurally constructed by the society on the basis of gender too, so the society changes and identity itself changes.

The mind of the protagonist is the facet of other minds refers to; like the identity of the protagonist, others' identity is also formed in the society, honeycomb stands for the society and its norms and values. When the identity of an individual is in crisis, he begins to feel sense and recognize his identity. Likewise, the protagonist begins to feel and think his identity that is in crises because of poverty and powerlessness in the society. Throughout the consciousness, struggle plays the vital role in order to form the identity. Every individual's identity is encircled within the web of society where the identity of an individual is formed which is fluctuational and situational. Therefore, each individual's identity is worldly perceptual. Identity can be examined and looked in various ways. No identity is already formed. If the identity is formed it can be changed too. In this sense, the protagonist of the novel further states; "I could examine in less detail but is more perspective how the illuminated envelop about the earth thrilled and glowed and changed and shivered in its dance" (98). Here he is claiming the changing identity. One identity can be functional in different ways along multiple perspectives. It means that identity is not fixed and signified one but it is in shifting process and contingent.

According to Michael Foucault, author, text and characters are just discursive representations which are changeable in the dynamic interplay of contending forces. He views the truth, knowledge and identities as the production of discourse and says:

Truth is not outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and function would repay further study, truth is not the reward of free spirits. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints. And it includes regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is the type of discourse [...]. (Foucault, 1144)

In the same way, Identity is a kind of truth that is represented by means of power struggle and statements. Identity is to be historical, changeable and a production of an ongoing process of differentiation which is repetitive; it is political, a subject to the redefinition, resistance and change. In present day, identity is an issue of studying into the race and ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality, and nationality as well as sub-culture which causes the multiplicity of identities.

Gender is defined by psychological, physiological and economical forces. On the basis of gender too, identity of an individual is formed. Psychologically, the protagonist is mentally disordered, physically he is rough, weak and existentially in crisis and economically he is poor and moneyless. By these factors, identity of the protagonist is defined but actually his identity is not that which is formed by the gender role. In this background, the protagonist defines and states the identity as;

All that drama of deep blue oceans that held their still unknown and secret life, and roaring storms, and crashing restless waves, and tides dragged about by the moon had become a thin smear of slippery substance on a toughly textured globe of matter, and humanity and animal life and bird life and reptile life and insect life-all these were variations in a little crust on this globe. (94)

Identity of the protagonist is the drama that functions differently in different context which is still unknown like the secrete life and roaring storms and crashing restless waves might be occurred in any time and situation. So as the identity of the protagonist is occurring differently as the situation demands. Like the nature of the moon, identity of the protagonist changes in its constant flux. To be full moon, the shape of the moon changes. Similarly, like the humanity, animal life and creatures' life, the identity of the protagonist changes in its time and shape on this earth. In this

backdrop of changing phenomena, the researcher attempts to show the various identities of the protagonist. Identity is the matter of product and representation of the society that is always changing, dynamic and contingent in its nature. Identity is flux, multiple, changeable, incomplete and contingent on its constant flux. The shape of the moon changes before and after becoming the full moon. In the same way, the identity of the protagonist changes in its constant flux.

Sexuality is another identity marker that determines the identity of an individual. It creates the various identities of the protagonist. Identity is the shifting process where sex plays the significant and important role in order to formulate the identity of the protagonist. In the sense of sex, Simon de Beauvoir states that identity can be formulated and established along struggle and resistance. The gender construction is largely based on myth and it is arbitrarily constructed by physical appearance and thus it is an imaginary one not real and natural. Gender is constructed through the network of social and political relations that needs to be reinterpreted. Therefore, gender and sexuality is also an unstable category and the identity is formed but it cannot remain stable, unchangeable and universal one. Similarly, Judith Butler, a noted feminist critic, claims that the traditional notion of gender confers a false sense of legitimacy and universality to a culturally specific and culturally oppressive version of gender identity. She claims as:

Gender as a “factor” or a “dimension” of an analysis, it is also applied to embodied persons as “a mark” of biological, linguistic, and/or cultural difference [...] Some feminist theorists claim that gender is “a relation”, indeed, a set of relations, and not an individual attribute. (13)

Judith Butler also opines that is not a fixed category and also suggests that gender is not only the matter of socio-cultural construct but a psychological as well. So, the

quality of females exists within a man and the masculine qualities prevail within a woman. Therefore, gender bears in itself a subversive quality. Hence, the protagonist is struggling and fighting in order to invent his identity where sex plays the significant role. So, this research paper attempts to show the sexuality as strongest identity maker. It can be seen in these flowing lines:

The males were roused to sexual excitement any time a female of any age approached, and the females were nearly as sensitized [...] Others came to watch the sexual act, and let out high excited yapping and squeaking, and stimulated past bearing, feel on each other and went off to nearby bushes or sheltered places so that one mating might start off a frenzy that could last half a day. (74)

These lines further adhere that identity of the protagonist is changeable and fluctuational one. Identity is the product of discourse which is created rather than natural and stable one. Sex plays the power- relation because power creates and invents the identity of an individual. Here males are roused to sexual excitement any time and approached the female one even if females are with swollen sexual organs. It happens because of power domination upon the females. This means, power can create and invent the others' identities as submissive object. Therefore, the identity of the protagonist is invented by the society which is not fixed and singular one rather it is the product of discourse and power representation through the use of language. In the same lines, power can circulate from one to another because power lies in horizontal form and order. That's why, these lines also help to define and characterize the fluctuational nature of identity: "Their sexual organs were swollen with excitement, and one of them attempted to mate with her even as she died. She died in a spam that was as much as birth-as a death-spam" (85).

The role given to change identity is entirely based on the traditional idea of gender construction. Charles Watkins is presented as mentally retired one because of his silence nature in which his identity is invented. He is distinguished from other people of dominant group like Doctor-X and Doctor-Y on the basis of class differences. When he works in war and classic Cambridge University, he is discriminated and marginalized; especially because of his class and abnormality. But, all these happen because of society and time. The complex issue of identity is not fixed and stable one rather it is fluid, changeable, contingent and incomplete. Therefore, the nature of identity is fluctuational and in process. Further this idea can be approved by these lines;

Who are you?
 I'm doctor –Y
 I've never known anyone of that name
 Don't you remember me?
 That's not what I have to remember.
 No, Not if you don't want. But who are you?
 Why, can't you see me?
 I can see you very well indeed.
 Then there you are.
 Can you remember your name now perhaps?
 My name! But I've had so many names. (132)

These lines state that identity is not fixed rather it is fluid, changeable, dynamic, multiple, incomplete and contingent in its constant flux. Identity is formed and constructed one which can be changed on its constant flux. Identity is designed to identify an individual. Similarly, Charles Watkins states: "Identities had been designed

to remain unknown to the inhabitants of Earth. But throughout the solar system, tales of the various Descents were told and retold-as fables, as far as most people were concerned" (123).

Race and Ethnicity are another part of identity marker. Regarding the issue of identity, race and ethnicity are also forms of identity which themselves are unstable cultural creations. Race is a social construction which is historically contingent and defined within certain socio-cultural parameters that are unstable and culture specific. Therefore, races do not exist outside the representation but are formed in a process of social and political power struggle; race is a culture. Ethnicity is a cultural concept centered on the sharing of norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices. The ethnicity is also constituted through power relation between groups leads to the relation of marginality. Discourse of ethnic and marginality are normally expressed to nationality. In this sense, Protagonist states that "we were in the condition of peasants in a technological society. We still believed in the power of heroism over any odds" (205). It means that the identity of the protagonist is trapped on the power holder of the state and society. When the power holder loses his authority, the identity of the individual changes. Therefore, identity of the protagonist is contingent which is not complete and singular one rather it is multiple and contextual one. In this view point, ethnicity plays the vital role in order to create the identity of an individual in the society. The following lines adhere and address the issue of identity:

Each individual of this species is looked up inside his own skull, his own personal experience or believe that he is and while a great part of their ethical systems, religious system, etc; state of unity of life, even the most recent religion, which, being the most recent, is the most

powerful, called science, has only fitful and inadequate gleams of
being of insight into the fact that life is one. (120-21)

Viewing these lines, identity is circulated within the society by the product of social discourse. Identity varies according to personal experience or believes. Identity is multiple and contingent according to time and space. The creation of identity is based on religiosity. Religion is most powerful weapon by which identity of an individual is formed that is not fixed and single one but contextual one. Identity can be formulated from general to specific periphery and specific to general hence, identity is fluctuational in its constant flux.

Similarly, identity is representation of discourse of the society. Identity is the production of representation and conducted by human in dynamic interchange of beliefs, attitudes, sentiments, emotion and other expressions of states of consciousness. Therefore, identity is never universal and fixed but the production of discourse that regulates it in its context. Hence, identity is constituted by representation rather than found within certain socio-cultural background. The identity of the protagonist is changeable and contingent according to the context. Identity can be formulated as representation through discourse. The identity of the protagonist is multiple which the product of the society. This issue of identity can be found in following lines:

Every time a new city is dug up, the boundaries (in time) are
grudgingly shifted back-a couple of hundred years perhaps, half a
millennium [...] 'we cannot make any pronouncements at all about
human history, because our knowledge(or our guesses) is limited to the
last site we have(partly) dug'? No, no not at all, what their present

knowledge is-is knowledge, for this is how they always go on, it seems they have to; it is how their unfortunate brains are formed. (110)

Identity is a contextual phenomenon, which is always in the process of shifting and emerging. Every time a new city is dug up means there is upcoming generation and their identities are created by the society as it is based on its time and space. When we look at human history, we cannot make any pronouncements' at all because the history itself is changeable as the identity of the protagonist is changing in its constant flux. Therefore, every individual's identity is not fixed rather it is formulated and circulated by the society as its representation. Naming is the product of representation through power-relation in discourse. As the lines state that human history is not fixed and truth so as the identity is not truth and fixed rather it is shifting phenomena from general to specific and specific to general as the context demand. In this regard, identity is multiple, dynamic, changeable, contingent and incomplete state of mind.

Similarly, according to Ross Pool, the major source of national identity has been its inescapability. For modern world, nation has appropriated to itself the linguistic and cultural means necessary for the articulation of the sense of self of its members. National identity is often used as an argument for the existence of special obligations and moral responsibilities:

Acquiring a national identity also involves learning to take responsibility for past events. As I become conscious of myself as a member of a nation, I become aware of certain past-the history of my nation-and I learn to appropriate it as a past which is mine-through one I share with many others. This may be a source of pleasure and pride, or perhaps of shame; in either case, it is a past in which I am morally implicated. (273)

Of course, our national identity is not chosen one, but determined by the contingencies of birth and upbringing. It is contingency which makes this identity seem morally suspect. Further, Poole claims that “national identity is never fully available to the rational reflection and reappropriation” (275).

Nationality is significant and effective factor to create the identity of an individual. The major source of national identity has been its inescapability. Nation has appropriated to itself the linguistic and cultural means necessary for the articulation of the sense of self of its members for modern world. National identity is often used as an argument for the existence of special obligations and moral responsibilities. The identity of an individual is not chosen one but determined by the contingencies of birth and upbringing. In this sense, “National identity is never fully available to the rational reflection and reappropriation” (275). Therefore, identity is the combination of social, economic and cultural factors, and not the statements of cultural differences alone that give to challenge the dominant group changing meanings of the identity and their transcendence of cultural boundaries have forced people to adopt various majors to create multiple identities. The identity of an individual is directly or indirectly associated and attached with nationality. Identity of an individual is the identity of the nation. Nationality allocates the individual’s identity.

Nationality is the individual as well as citizens’ identity which is bound within the geographical location. Nationality marked the identity of the people. Here, the protagonist, Charles Watkins’ identity is marked and changed because of the geographical relation. The following lines state the reason behind forming identity:

Nations-were marked out, and held what was necessary and appropriate to them, and it mattered very much whether a concept

‘nation’ matched with the physical area beneath it [...] They were manipulated from above (or below) by physical forces. The identity of the protagonist is invented because of the geographical area and beneath it; the identity of the protagonist is manipulated by physical forces. (98-99)

Therefore, to identify his changeable identity, he further states that “I was conscious always of that old, that very amient, weight, the cold of grief I had become aware of so early on after my absorption into this new area of being" (97). Similarly, identity is dynamic, contingent and incomplete state of mind. It is formed because of nationality too. Identity is the bright part of the nation.

Everyone forms his/her identity because of his/her lives in the nation. How the formation of identity is formed and changed through individuality over multiplicity and multiplicity to individuality is because of shifting and constant flux. These kinds of fluctuation of identity can be seen in these lines too:

A honeycomb letting my mind lie dark there quiescent, a mirror for light, I could feel, or sense, or recognize, a pulse of individuality that I had known once [...] Each of these people had formed in their lives, were continuously forming in every breath they took, and through this web, these webs, ran a finer beat, as water ran everywhere in the stone city through channels cut or built in rock by men who were able to grade the lift or the fall of the earth. (97)

Identity of the protagonist is changing contextually. Cultural identity does not ever take the form of national identity. It is plausible to think that cultural and linguistic horizons of the vast majority of people are limited to the small rural communities in which they lived. National identity has been in its inescapability but in modern world,

the nation has appropriated to itself the linguistic and cultural means necessary for the articulation of the sense of self of its members. The fusion of language and culture defined by the nation has so entered our conception of ourselves is national identity that provides us with a specific moral agenda. The national identity is often used as an argument for the existence of special obligations. Acquiring a national identity also involves learning to take responsibility for past events. In this sense, identity is changeable and contextual one : “I stood up and looked me at a city which seemed as if it had changed, though I could not say how it had. There was a new feeling about it, its peace and silence had gone” (70).

The identity of the protagonist, Charles Watkins is created in society. Each identity is created in order to represent the individuality. The issue of identity is complex and not fixed rather it is changeable, contingent, plural and incomplete in its nature of context. The protagonist, Charles Watkins is a poor from a lower class family so he is defined in relation to other wild friends like bird, fish, dogs, porpoises and so on. Professor is another identity marker in the society. Professor also makes the multiple identities of the individuals like Nurse and Doctor. Same as historical sense too, identity is not fixed and stable. It is in the process of shifting from general to specific and specific to general. Identity is socio-historical construct rather than natural and biological one. The identity of the protagonist is created. His identity is social construction which is changeable, dynamic and contingent in its historical time and space. The following lines support the contingency of identity:

I can't remember. And she's foundered or wrecked long ago. And the raft never had a name. You don't call a raft as you call a person [...].
How can I name the raft when I don't know my own name? I'm called [...]. What? Who calls me? What? Why? You are doctor why, and I am

called why-that's it, it was the good ship why that foundered in the
Guinea current, leaving who on the slippery raft and [...]. (30)

In these above lines, he does not know his name and how can he identify the raft. His identity is societal and representation of discourse. He is not putting his name willingly but it is the social construction. Society itself is not fixed and stable. It is in ever changing process. When the society changes, the identity itself changes in its context. Therefore, the identity of the protagonist and any individual is flux and slippery in its nature.

Identity of the protagonist is changing on the basis of the contextual factors. The identity of the protagonist is not fixed rather it is the representative discourse of the society. How the moon is changing its own shape, so as the identity of the protagonist is changing on its socio-political context. This idea can be justified in these lines too:

The memory of the nights I had drunk blood and eaten flesh with the
women under the full moon struck my new mind, and there was a
reeling and then a rallying of its structure, while I accepted and held
the memory and then I had moved out beyond, but now the women
were lodged in my mind, my new mind. (91)

The identity of the protagonist is the social structural representation because society has its own norms and values by which identity is created but it functions like a moon. Moon itself is not fixed and static rather it is changeable on its shape. As moon changes its shape, identity of the protagonist also changes on its constant flux.

There are so many factors that play the significant role in order to establish and create the identity of the protagonist. Identity itself is not created but society creates and circulates it. Here, protagonist further adheres, "In this great enclosing

web of always changing light moved flames and tones and thrills of light that sang and sounded, on deeper and higher notes, so what I saw, or rather was part of, was neither light nor sound, but the place or area where these two identities become one" (93). Identity is multiple, changeable, fluctuational and contingent in its constant flux. Similarly, colonialism and post colonialism are other important identity markers. Along with various attitudes and perspectives, identity can be formulated and created variously. Though the identity is complex and genuine aspect in contemporary society. Everyone searches their identity but remains in incomplete state of mind because of its contingency. This idea is further claimed as:

The sun, the energy of the sun, and that was the controlling governor of them all, beside whose strength all the subsidiary laws and necessities were nothing. The ground and soul and heart and centre of this little solar system were the light and pulse and song of the sun, the sun was king. (100)

In this way, identity of the minorities is depending upon the dominant groups. As the identity of all the satellites depend upon the sun, the identity of the colonized people depends upon the identity given to them by the colonizers in colonialism. Therefore, identity for Foucault is social construction.

Colonialism not only changes the identity of the individual from free people to the herd of people. It may also damage the identity of the nation too. European countries' identity is different with the Asian as well as African one. These types of situation are clearly shown, by Doris Lessing's in this novel:

It seemed as if there was something, but I couldn't see what, which made, let's say, that mass of land which we called Russia, European Russia, give off a glow which did not change and this shade was

different from the shade which pervaded. The mass we call Asia and there were different, but steadily different from other areas of the world. (98)

Here, Doris Lessing clearly shows the fluctuation of identity of any nation. Before colonialism, every countries are free to choose their political system by own. But after colonialism occurs there, they are bound in the chain of imperial, barbarian rulers. The identity of the colonized nation changes.

For an individual, in colonialism, identity is a flying bird which has distinct identity in the different spheres. Humanity is remaining as crucial factors only in laws but in practices, there is no humanity. Charles Watkins, the protagonist of the novel reminds one of the incident when he saw in England. "I was watching great movement of human events". (99) Watkins further says, "for all countries, every one, every crust of mould or part of humanity were held in laws, that they could not change or upset. They were manipulated from above by physical force" (99).

In colonialism, Colonized people are distinguished subordinate group of people that is separated from the colonizers in the society on the basis of perceived so called knowledge, attitude and ideologies. Colonizers have greater political and economic power than the Colonized people. In many cases, the Colonizers or dominant group discriminates against minority that it treats them unfairly. In this way, Colonized people felt that their identity is in danger from this political system. So, people search their previous identity as a free people. They questioned with themselves "Where I was" (99). They questioned with themselves "where I was?" (98). To prove this, Doris Lessing takes the analogy from solar system. She says that sun is the symbol of forever or king to whom other surrounds. "Just as the waters, the oceans moved and swung under the compulsion of the sun, and the moon, so did the

life of man, oscillating into web of necessity” (100). In this way, colonialism is one problematic category for the colonized people in the context of their identity formation. It means Doris Lessing tries to show the fluctuative nature of human identity in this world.

Regarding the matter of identity, identity is not an individual affair rather than it is created of colonialism, racism, sexuality, ethnicity, and national sub-ordination as well as also in the specificity of group histories and structural position. Identities are constituted by discourse and representation rather than found within certain socio-cultural background. Any identity is the production of representation and conducted by human in dynamic interchange of beliefs, attitudes, sentiments, emotion and other expressions of states of consciousness. Therefore, identity is not fixed phenomenon rather it is an imperialist domination that formulates the identity of individual along with geographical location. The knowledge is necessarily exposed in terms of comparison with the dominating subject and with its own historical reality. Amilcar Cabral focuses on the issue of identity of an individual or a particular group of people is a biosociological factor outside the will of that individual or a group, but that is meaningful only when it is expressed in relation to other individual or other group. In this conceptual frame, he defines the identities as:

The definition of an identity, individual or collective, is at the same time the affirmation and denial of a certain number of characteristics which defined the individual or groups, through historical (biological and sociological) factors at a moment of their development. In fact, identity is not a constant, precisely because the biological and sociological factors which define it are in constant change. (58)

With the above lines, identity is not stable, fixed and singular rather it is the product of discourse how it is presented. Therefore identity has the characteristic of multiplicity, plurality, changeability, fluctuational in its socio-cultural phenomenon. To define identity, the sociological factors are more important than the biological one.

Identity formation is concerned with the variety of social and political movement engaged in complex articulator practices. Identity of the “self” is based on that of socio-political and cultural aspects. Ellek Bochmer, in his book, colonial and post colonial literature writes that “in a great many cultural context, identity is based on the distinction of self from what is believed to be not self. It is an endemic to cultures to negotiate with what is not known or between people or subjectivities unfamiliar to one another on the basis of convention” (79). It means Botcher arguments is that context can change the identity of the people. In this novel, *Briefing for a Decent into a Hell*, Doris Lessing also argues that the identity of the people has been changed as a changing scene of the houses. From the protagonist of novel, Charles Watkins, Lessing presents:

Once this city had had roof of tiles made of this clay, and clay being more vulnerable to time than rock, these tiles had dissolved away in heavy rain or in the winds that must tear and buffet and ravage along this exposed high edge whenever it stormed. (52)

So, human identity is changeable, functional and contingency. As we change the style, format of the house according to the change occurred in the context and situation, same as the loss of identity too. Identity is changed according to the change occurred in the time, context and situation. Modernization impacts the human identity. There is the gap between old and new within the one or among the others. So, Charles Watkins

says, “slowly my senses, new senses, steadying” (88). Here, identity becomes changeable according to the time and context.

Society plays the pivotal role for the formation of an individual identity. No one is able to create his identity via own self. They are bound in the social chain. Charles Watkins is not become abnormal himself but society is responsible for it. He is great man so he is thinking about things (subtle substances) which can not seen by ordinary people. So, he is in the process of shifting and identifying his identity in the society. Psychologically, he is formulating his subjectivity which is not fixed and universal one rather it is contingent, changeable, dynamic and incomplete in its constant flux. The given lines prove so:

A man and women walking alone a street gives no evidence of what he is thinking, yet his thoughts are playing all about him in subtle currents of substance. But an ordinary person cannot see these subtle moving thoughts. One sees an animal with clothes on, its facial muscles slack, or in grimace. Bodily eyes sees bodies, see flesh. (57)

Most of the time, through the analogy, Lessing sees the fluctuated identity of the human being which may be changed according to the time and context. Being a social creature, human identity or individual identity of a man depends upon the social norms and values. If one tries to search his /her identity own self, s/he has given a tag as an “abnormal man” or “mad man”. In this novel, Charles Watkins searches for his own individual identity himself but the society feels that he is threatens the social norms and values. So he was taken in the Central Intake Hospital by the police, a representative of social security.

Society is the main identity marker. It creates the identity of the Charles Watkins. Society is a web in which the identity of an individual is formed. Identity

cannot be formed by himself/herself, but created by the society as a system like system of planet. Charles Watkins says, “My mind made another outward-going, out swelling, comprehension and now I saw how lines danced in a web that was the system of planet around the sun” (99). In this way, society is not fixed; it is changeable according to the time and space. If the society itself is not fixed and stable, than the identity of the protagonist is changeable, dynamic, and contingent in its constant flux.

Human identity is contrasted through the internal as well as external social factors. External factors play the significant role to identify the identity of the protagonist. Charles Watkins tries to define his individual ‘self’ in relation to ethical system, religions system, power science, knowledge and so on. The growing advancement of science and technology dominates all human being. These lines provide the same hints:

The chief thought was that our society was dominated by things, artifacts, possessions, machines, objects, and that we judged previous societies by artifacts –things. There was no way of knowing ancient societies ideas except through the barrier of our own. (165)

The above discussion makes us clear that society itself is not free to identify the individuality of the people. Society itself is dominated by machines, objects, artifacts and so on. So, human identity is fluctuated according to the time and context. In this novel, Charles Watkins’s identity is changed according to the context. At first, in the hospital bed, he is known as a mad person. But later, his identity is become changed according to the time and context.

Finally, he is known as a Professor, Charles Watkins. When Charles's wife goes to hospital for visiting her husband, Doctor reports the real condition of Charles Watkins when he is taken in the hospital:

Your husband brought here nearly two months ago, by the police, in a state of shock, having been robbed, without papers, money or knowledge of who he was. He was to talking to himself, hallucinated, he had religions delusions and he was paranoid. We did what we could to get him better, that's all. (175)

Later, Charles Watkins's real identity is found: "He is Professor Charles Watkins, Classics, Cambridge. Married, two sons aged so. A wallet found in the street in Parliament Square with family photograph, the rest of contexts missing" (133). Here, the identity of the people is in fluctuation and contingent. Charles Watkins has numerous identities with the numerous persons. It means different people have known Charles Watkins differently. Two doctors, Doctor-X and Doctor-Y tagged him mad man entered into the hospital for treatment. Jeremy Thorne has known Watkins as a destructive man. He says, "It is my considered opinion that Charles Watkins is a destructive person," (191). Another friend of Watkins, Miles Bovey recognizes him as a soldier." He was major-General Brent-Hampstead of little Gilstead, Devon" (201). He further defines him as a Second World War victor. In this way, the human identity is not determined by himself/herself. It depends upon the others, time and context. Doris Lessing presents this condition of humanity in a process of "in and out, in and out, in and out" (17).

In human history too, identity is in fluctuation from old to new human beings. When new human beings carry the power, they create new identity of human beings differently. Power holder can create the identity of the powerless. European and

American define the power and function of Asia and Africa. Therefore, power is another factor that plays the great role in order to formulate and create new identity: “It was a mutation, while not much different in appearance from the previous human; the new human being had increased power of perception, a different mental structure” (119). Hence, Identity is a shifting process from generation to generation which is incomplete and flux and contingent in its constant. In this sense, the identity of the protagonist of this novel, Charles Watkins is fluctuational. Thus, fluctuation nature of identity can be adhered in these following lines:

I’ve never known anyone of that name. Don’t you remember me?

That’s not what I have to remember. No, not if you don’t want. But who are you? Why can’t you see me? I can see you very well indeed.

Then there you are. Can you remember your name perhaps? My name!

But I had so many names. (132)

Here, Charles Watkins’s final answer "I’ve had so many names" (14) is an evident for that human identity is functional and marked by different situations and context. He has given the different identity in different circumstances. So, he is not able to say his single identity.

History is a factor which helps to identify people’s individual identity. History refers to the past events which has the significant role in the present scenario. So, in the human identity, the history from the albeit time of earth inflicted it. Doris Lessing brought the human history, since the earth time to identify the identity. Even more, she also takes the war history from Nazis era, Hitler and Tito invasion in the world. Lessing writes:

Civilizations might have very old histories. The earth is allowed to be millions of years old, but the birth of civilization is still set somewhere

between two thousands and four thousand B.C, the definition of civilization [...]. (109)

Human civilization started from the very past. When the civilization process started, then only human being got the distinct identity than the other creatures. It is known as the superior creature in this world, now. In another point, Charles Watkins, the representatives of all humanity, says that our identity is fluctuated and contingent due to the limitation of our knowledge. He remembers specialists: “We cannot make any pronouncements at all about human history, because our knowledge (or our guess) is limited to the last site we have (Partly) dug?” (110).

The novel: *Briefing for a Decent Into a Hell* depicts the human identity by reflecting the roots of human civilization. In Western civilization, Greek and Roman civilizations are taken as the mother civilizations which provide the later civilization such as European civilization or Christian civilization. In this backdrop, Charles Watkins remembers the Greek civilization as the mother and Roman civilization as the Daddy:

That Greece was the mother of western civilization and Rome its Daddy’ directed archaeology and evaluation for a long time yet [...] the Arabs, Moors and Saracens were parents to western civilization, sources of its ideas, its literature, its science, a case based on the same kind of evidence that made us legitimate heirs to Greece and Rome. (167)

In this way, Lessing not only draws the history from human civilization, she also takes the history of literature too. She does not forget the role of Plato, Socrates and Pythagoras for the human identity. They create different identities of human from their respective fields like Philosophy, Science and Mathematics. Through the war,

along with the Nazis, Hitler and Tito provide distinct identity of human beings. Therefore, the above mentioned description provides that human being is a peace, calm, animal as well as destructive, barbaric creature at the different context. Doris Lessing also presents the Homeric epic, *The Illiad*, and its contribution for the human identity.

At last, identity is social construct. Society gives different identity to the different persons: “Judges, Civil Servants, farmers and soldiers and talkers and moneymen and writers-each of these categories were one” (95). And society “fragments that composed each separate pulse or beat of light were one” (95). To define distinct and varied identity of human created by the society, Lessing writes:

Self important identities were reduced to a few, was another, different, but in some places matching. Pattern, of a stronger rarer light (or sound) that varied and pulsed and changed like the rest but connected direct, made a link and a bridge, a feeding channel, between the outer web of thought or feeling, the pulsating bubble of subtle surround color and the solid earthly watery globe of man. (95)

Charles Watkins faces numerous difficulties due to the social structure and its system. Self imposed identity is reduced into fewer. It may also change into another or different but we try to input into one.

Identity, the word itself has different meaning: “Words, that’s a word. To you that means one thing, but it’s different to me” (237). Different people have different notion about the identity. Some think that identity is stable. Nobody can change the identity of the others. Name is given to them to make his/her identity. Among them, spiritualist thinkers assume that God has gifted a unique identity to an individual. But on the other hand, some critics take it as a fluctuation. Among them, new historicist

thinkers came at first. They say that identity changes according to the time and context. It becomes mingled into one or shattered into fragments or pulse. The writer of this novel, Doris Lessing falls under the latter category. In one place, Charles Watkins says, “These two identities one” (93). On the other place, Charles Watkins feels that different identity markers given to him create emptiness. So he says, “Emptiness was in me and all about me” (68). In this way, identity is never universal and fixed but the production of discourse that regulates it in its context. It is not an individual affair rather it is created by colonialism, racism, sexuality, ethnicity and national sub-ordination as well as also by the specific group of histories and structural positions.

In a nutshell, Doris Lessing’s novel, *Briefing for a Decent Into Hell* reflects the fluctuation of human identity through the protagonist, Charles Watkins. He moves to and fro for the search of his individual identity and in the way, he has been taken to the hospital as a patient. Here, the society tags him a mad man's identity. He acts as a mad man. He uses his different names, perhaps five name; Jason, Jonah, Odysseus, Crafty, Crystal, for himself. Furthermore, in a sick bed, he searches for his identity. And Doris Lessing draws the different identities for him. She takes the examples from the beginning of human civilization. Along with it, she casts the different race; ethnicity, caste system and cultural systems for identify the human identity. Charles Watkins’s real identity is not found at the last of the novel. Doris Lessing plays the clever role here by presenting the multiple identities of the protagonist; Charles Watkins as Jason, Jonah, Oddyeous, Crafty, Crystal and so on. So, *Briefing for a Decent into a Hell* is the perfect example of fluctuated and contingent human identity.

III. Conclusion : Multiplicity of Identity in *Briefing for a Decent Into Hell*

Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell* is a creative manifestation of the protagonist's multiple identities that have been presented very realistically throughout the novel through the protagonist's contingency, situatedness and discursive representation. With the representation of mentally disordered protagonist, Charles Watkins, who loses his identity because of his psychological disability in terms of society and medical science in the novel, Lessing critiques to formulate his identity and also question the notion of norm and social configurations that produce the identity. This novel primarily deals with the protagonist's socio-political, cultural, national, racial, economical, gender and ethnic situatedness and his relational formation of subjectivity and identity in the society. In this sense, his identity remains incomplete, multiple, always on the process of becoming because of dynamic interplay of such contending factors. One of the main parts of the novel, *Briefing for a Decent Into Hell* revolves around the dynamic identity of the protagonist, Charles Watkins. The fluctuational identity of the protagonist can be seen in various aspects of the society. Identity of the protagonist varies in its constant flux. Class consciousness is the first identity marker. Here, the political dimension of class consciousness and especially the relation between members of the class and organizations are therefore rapidly changing as the identity of the protagonist changes. Therefore, class is the determining factor of identity of the protagonist though his identity is formed as the class formed.

Even though he is in the supreme position of gender being male, he cannot acquire his iconic identity because of his mental retardation. Here, the protagonist being the male does not have his own fixed identity rather it is flux in its gender role because gender does not function properly because of his psychological disordered

structure and societal demarcation of normal and abnormal norms. The mind of the protagonist is the facet of other minds refers as; like the identity of the protagonist, other identities are also formed in the society. Similarly, sexuality creates the various identities of the protagonist. The role given to changes identity is entirely based on the traditional idea of gender and sexual construction. Therefore, the protagonist, Charles Watkins is presented as mentally retired man because of his silent nature in which his identity is invented. On the other hand, race and ethnicity are another parts of identity markers. Regarding the issue of identity, race and ethnicity are also the form of identity which themselves are instable, changeable, dynamic, multiple and contingent in its constant flux. Hence, race and ethnicity do not exist outside the socio-cultural parameter that are unstable and culture specific thus the identity is socio-cultural construction that is flux in its context.

Identity is the representation of socio-cultural discourse of the existing society. Identity is the production of representation and conducted by human is dynamic interchange and interplay of beliefs, attitudes, sentiments, emotion and other expressions of states of consciousness. Therefore, identity is never universal and fixed but the production of discourse that regulates it in its context. On the same lines, nationality is effective factor to create the identity of the protagonist here. Identity of the protagonist is not chosen one but determined by the contingencies of birth and upbringing. Similarly, the identity of the protagonist is culture-specific.

Regarding the notion of identity, there are so many factors that play the significant and effective role in order to establish and create the identity of the protagonist. Identity itself is not created but society creates and circulates it. Like above factors, colonialism and post colonialism are also the identity markers of the protagonist. Along with various attitudes and perspectives, identity can be formulated

and created variously. Here, the protagonist's identity is shifted like Jason to Jonah, Jonah to Odysseus, Odysseus to Crafty, and Crafty to crystal and so on.

To wrap up, Lessing attempts to show the multiple and changeable identity of the protagonist throughout this novel projecting the idea from various fields such as class, gender, race, culture, ethnicity, colonial and postcolonial sense, nationality, imperialism and some other related things which are existing in the society. Identity is the formation from general to specific and specific to general, hence it is the process of shifting rather than fixed and singular one, identity is never stable and singular one rather it is changeable, multiple and contingent in its constant flux. Thus, identity is the product of social discourse and regulates the individual's worldly perceptions. Identity is determined by class, race, gender, ethnicity, nationality and so on. It is the society, situatedness and contingencies which condition identity throughout the novel. However, all these identities are not complete in themselves. They can never consolidate rather identities are created and hence shifted from one to another.

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