

1. Kiran Desai and Colonialism

Colonialism in India

In the mid eighteenth century, India became one of Great Britain's most important colonies. Beginning in 1757, the East India Company, which was overseen by the British government, ruled India. This system was very successful, until one hundred years later, when the Sepoy Rebellion occurred. Then, after helping the East India Company regain control of India, Britain took direct control of the nation and ruled over it till 1947. The British rule over India changed the course of history in India.

While Great Britain felt that they were being very generous to the Indian people in colonizing and modernizing the nation, the Indians did not always agree with this. Under British rule, many new roads, railways, and harbors were built, and a telegraph system was created. While the Indians were forced to do much labor in the construction of these things, they were often kept from enjoying and benefiting from the finished products. In fact, the Indian people were treated as second class citizens in their own nation. They were banned from many government positions, and had little rights. They often received lower wages than Europeans working in the same job, and their educations did little for them. The Indians eventually came together to fight against the way that they were treated influenced by the same sense of nationalism that had prompted the British to colonize India more than a century before. After much struggle, India finally gained independence from Great Britain in August 1947.

Colonialism in India was also a state of economic hegemony. It aimed not at grabbing land, but the markets present in those lands. It was state of dominance resulting in exploitation and repression of the colonized. Actually, the British

colonialism in India owes its success to the soft expressions of control. The British used to classify, categorize, order and fix the identity of India from the landmass, population, culture and traditions it represented.

The British weren't here to civilize India but to create a mindset that they were far better people and it was their duty to civilize the savages. The British pointed out that setting up of railways, telegraph networks, irrigation canal systems was a positive work of their towards the development of the nation. The nationalist counter argued that networks are merely instruments of controlling the flow of information and bounded the geographical space of India.

Colonialism was in fact a massive thrust towards gaining native knowledge of the colonized and applying it to subjugating him. The British completed the task of colonization of the minds of Indians by imparting 'Western education'. Scholars like Raja Ram Mohan Roy persuaded the British to impart English education in India. Notable in this regard was the contribution of Thomas Macaulay. Gradually, a perception was created which regarded knowledge of the colonizers to be far superior from those of the colonies. Literature from England was termed to be logical where as the Indian literature was either condemned or ignored. British form of colonization influenced the ability to distinguish between inferior and superior goods. Any thing coming from England was perceived as a boon.

Finally after 200 years of British rule, India gained independence from them on 15th August, 1947. Many innocent lives were sacrificed for this achievement and India was also separated from Pakistan. The partition of India and Pakistan spread incidents of brutality and horror in both the countries. But due to the effort of the leaders and the ever sacrificing masses, India was able to gain freedom from the British and progress till the present times.

The effects of nineteenth century colonialism can still be felt today. These effects can be felt on many different levels of life and culture in India. When Britain colonized India, the English language quickly spread, and the indigenous languages of the natives began to be wiped out. The British during the Raj had taught the Indians English to turn them into subjects. But today, in post colonial India, Indians have adopted the English language as their own and morphed it to suit them. As a result, there is a vast pool of English speaking natives, who are rapidly transforming India into a leading powerhouse. But the debate rages on as to the adoption of the English language in India. In addition, the traditional culture of India was altered, taking on a more European style. With such changes to its culture, language, and way of life, the newly independent country was forced to rediscover itself in a fast paced world.

The two institutional interventions that had long term effects were introduction of the British education system and the legal system. The missionaries played a major role in setting up schools and colleges which were channels for introducing modern European knowledge system to India. Graduates from these schools and colleges were recruited as personnel in the offices of the government and companies. This was the beginning of the mass production of clerks at various levels. The first learners of the English language in India became the 'Babu'. They were the class of interpreters that Macaulay had envisioned to play the role of mediator between them and the Indian masses. In British India, 'Babu' was a term used to describe a native Indian clerk. The word was originally used as a term of respect attached to a proper name, but later, especially when used alone and not as a suffix, was a derogatory word signifying a semi-literate native, with a mere veneer of modern education.

The British form of colonialism in India was remarkably different from the ones practiced in Africa, Australia and America. While the British administrators

believed in getting more intimate with the people elsewhere, either through the distribution of gifts or by their policies, they were all set to conquer the minds of the people residing in the subcontinent. After independence, English became the dominant language of communication among the educated classes. It also became a link language in a diverse multi-lingual country, bridging the north-south divide. Along with Hindi as the official language, English was also used for official purposes in India. Ramachandra Guha reports on the adoption of the English language by the Indian Union in his book *India After Gandhi* as, “the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in the Devanagari script but the notes and proceedings of the courts, the services, and the all-India bureaucracy would be conducted in English” (120).

The biggest gift of colonization was the English language and ‘Western education’. That created numerous British clones that totally distorted the native identity of the Indians. The English language was learned everywhere in India, because people found out that the knowledge of English was a passport for better career, better pay, advanced knowledge and for communication with the entire world.

Colonialism was thus a project of control which was executed in the form of several gazetteers, archaeological expeditions, surveys, the census and other government reports. It were the minds of the people that the British colonized, be it through knowledge, education or science. It was only the knowledge of the native Indians which was instrumental in their ability to govern effectively. Under colonial rule India often depended on Great Britain for such things as technological advances and manufactured goods. Once it became independent, India slowly fell behind the rest of the world, as it had to learn to depend less on other nations and more on itself. In addition to colonization changing the culture of India, it also affected that of the mother country, Great Britain. Colonization led to an increased diversity of culture in

Great Britain. This was because many people from India began to move to Great Britain.

Kiran Desai and Her Works

Kiran Desai was born in India in 1971. She lived in Delhi until she was 14, then spent a year in England, before her family moved to the USA. Educated in India, England and the United States, she now travels between the three countries, and says she feels no alienation or dislocation.

She spent four years writing her first novel, and says it is not at all autobiographical. She completed her schooling in Massachusetts before attending Bennington College; Hollins University and Columbia University, where she studied creative writing, taking two years off to write *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*. Her mother is Anita Desai, author of many books, three of which have been short listed for the Booker Prize (*Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984) and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999). Anita Desai currently teaches writing at MIT. Being the daughter of the distinguished Indo-English writer Anita Desai, Kiran does not share the same intensity that her mother weaves in her potent tales. But she does not disappoint in producing a maddeningly entertaining novels. Not that the strains of the umbilical chord is negated totally in Kiran Desai's writing. Although Kiran has not lived in India since she was 14, she returns to the family home in Delhi every year.

She first came to literary attention in 1997 when she was published in the *New Yorker* and in *Mirrorwork*, an anthology of 50 years of Indian writing edited by Salman Rushdie - *Strange Happenings in the Guava Orchard* was the closing piece. In 1998, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, which had taken four years to write, was published to good reviews. In her dazzling, much-heralded debut novel, Kiran Desai tells a wryly hilarious and poignant story of life, love, and family relationships -

simultaneously capturing the vivid culture of the Indian subcontinent and the universal intricacies of human experience.

Leafing through Kiran Desai's debut novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, is like sipping cool, tangy lemonade in the sweltering summer sun. Refreshing and succulent like green guavas of the orchard that Desai has created, the novel once again confirms that Indian writing in English has come to stay. As expected from the rich input of her cultural background, her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), is a pacy, fresh look at life in the sleepy provincial town of Shahkot in India. The central character of the novel, Sampath Chawla, failed postal clerk and pathological dreamer, escapes from his work and his oppressive family to live in a guava tree. Here he spends his life snoozing, musing and eating the ever-more exotic meals cooked for him by his sociopathic mother. He begins to amaze his fellow townspeople by revealing intimate details about them gleaned from a bit of lazy letter-opening whilst still working at the post office and by spouting a series of truisms worthy of a Shakespearian fool. Before long he becomes known as a local guru and attracts such a strong flow of visitors that opening hours have to be established in the orchard to allow him to rest.

Like many important works of literature, the book can be read on several levels. As an inventive, fast-moving, delicious tale full of rich descriptions and marvelous comic cartoon-like personalities, but also as a deeper study of the pathos of familial misunderstanding, the ridiculousness of hero-worship, the unpredictability of commercialism and the ineptness of officialdom. The novel, which was excerpted in the *New Yorker*, is something of a roller-coaster ride, in which the world seems turned topsy-turvy, and the dizzy feeling thereafter inertly tingles the fibers on the insides.

The novel's strength is the steady fluidity in which the story unfolds itself

by the use of brilliantly lucid images, along with a distinct choice of unaffected words and phrases, and a bratish set of characters. Desai has handled the big-time dreams of a middle-class family with a keen sense of humor.

Published to extraordinary acclaim, *The Inheritance of Loss* heralds Kiran Desai as one of our most insightful novelists. She illuminates the pain of exile and the ambiguities of post colonialism with a tapestry of colorful characters. *The Inheritance of Loss* is set partly in India and partly in the USA. Desai describes it as a book that tries to capture what it means to live between East and West and what it means to be an immigrant, and says that it also explores at a deeper level, what happens when a Western element is introduced into a country that is not of the West. That happened during the British colonial days in India, and is happening again with India's new relationship with the States in the new era of Globalization. Her aim was to write about what happens when we take people from a poor country and place them in a wealthy one. How does the imbalance between these two worlds change a person's thinking and feeling. How do these changes manifest themselves in a personal sphere, a political sphere, over time.

The Inheritance of Loss presents postcolonial India as a country caught in the play of past and present. Most of the characters in the novel live in the present eclipsed by their past interwoven with that of their country. They try to possess the ideals they have attached to the past in various ways but eventually end up with an experience of dispossession. Unable to relate with their class and culture, they are victims of their own origins in the age of global capitalism.

The Inheritance of Loss (2006) revolves around the inhabitants of a town in the north-eastern Himalayas, an embittered old judge, his granddaughter Sai, his cook and their rich array of relatives, friends and acquaintances and the effects on the lives

of these people brought about by a Nepalese uprising. Running parallel with the story set in India we also read the vicissitudes of the cook's son Biju as he struggles to realize the American Dream as an immigrant in New York. The loss in her title is chiefly the loss of faith in India felt among the legions who overstay tourist visas and become illegal immigrants in the US. Her story counterpoints the lives of an embittered old judge, a survivor of British colonial rule, with those of his loyal cook and the cook's son, one of the immigrants who scrabbles for subsistence on developing world pay in New York.

The Inheritance of Loss manages to explore just about every contemporary international issue. Despite being set in the mid-1980, it seems to be the best kind of post millennium novel. Desai touches upon many different issues throughout the book such as globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism, and different forms of love. It took her seven years to complete and Kiran Desai used her own expression of being an Indian living in the United States to write the novel. *The Inheritance of Loss* is much more ambitious than *Hullabaloo* in its spatial breadth and emotional depth. It also takes on huge subjects such as morality and justice. It takes its reader on a see-saw of negative emotions. There is pathos which often goes hand in hand with revulsion, for example in the description of the judge's adoration of his dog Mutt, the disappearance of which rocks his whole existence, set against his cruelty to his young wife. There is frequent outrage at the deprivation and poverty in which many of the characters live, including the cook's son in America. There is also humiliation in the treatment of Sai by her lover-turned-rebel, or Lola, who tries to stand up to the Nepalese insurgents.

An original and modern aspect of Desai's style is the almost poet-like use she makes of different print forms on the page. She uses italics for foreign words as if to

emphasize their exoticness and untranslatability and capitals for emphasis when someone is angry, expressing surprise or disbelief. Desai produces her own array of matter of fact but quite unnerving lists like the parts of their bodies which touch when Gyan and Sai kiss or the wide variety of puddings that the cook is able to make.

There is a common thread that connects Jemubhai, Sai, Biju and Gyan. All of them struggle with their identity and fail to maintain a foothold within the encroaching Westernization in postcolonial India. This thesis would focus on the struggle for identity that the above characters undergo against the forces of modernization. So, while trying to find a foot hold in the modern world, they get entangled in alienation and ruin.

At every stage wherever they are, Jemubhai, Sai, Biju and Gyan are forced to negotiate with a stratified society and struggle with their cultural identity and the forces of modernization, westernization and globalization. All of them aspire to create an identity that comes with destructive consequences, leading all of them to frustration.

Desai's first book *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) won the Betty Trask Award and *The Inheritance of Loss* was the Man Booker winner (2005) that took almost eight years to write. At her first attempt Desai, not only became the youngest woman to win but achieved a victory which repeatedly eluded her mother. The esteemed Indian novelist Anita Desai to whom *The Inheritance of Loss* is dedicated has been shortlisted three times for the Man Booker.

A number of critics have attended to different aspects of Desai's novel. Pankaj Mishra considers it as a novel about "every contemporary issue" but focuses primarily on her representation of postcolonial world. He opines that Desai represents

postcolonial India as living with only promise of present and hatred derived from the past:

....[M]ost people in the postcolonial world [are left] with only the promise of a shabby modernity - modernity, as Desai puts it, “in its meanest form, brand-new one day, in ruin the next.” Not surprisingly, half-educated, uprooted men like Gyan gravitate to the first available political cause in their search for a better way. He joins what sounds like an ethnic nationalist movement largely as an opportunity to vent his rage and frustration. “Old hatreds are endlessly retrievable,” Desai reminds us, and they are “purer . . . because the grief of the past was gone. Just the fury remained, distilled, liberating”. (11)

Another critic James Ley deems *The Inheritance of Loss* as a political novel “based around a contrast between a faded ideal of British civilisation and the siren call of progressive modern capitalism embodied by the United States. Indian society is caught in between, influenced by both” (6).

Michael Carlisle talks about the impact of globalization when he writes in *Publishers Weekly* as:

In this alternately comical and contemplative novel, Desai deftly shuttles between first and third worlds, illuminating the pain of exile, the ambiguities of post-colonialism and the blinding desire for a better life, when one person’s wealth means another’s poverty. (34)

On the issue of seclusion about the Judge, Mandira Sen writes, “He had broken his ties with his parents, extended family, and community of Patel’s who had seen him off on his voyage to Cambridge University with great fanfare and hopes of

general betterment” (191). Similarly Donna Seaman comments on the shadowy fairy tale as:

Like life in a majestic landscape where nature is so rambunctious it threatens to overwhelm every human quest for order. Add violent political unrest fomented by poor young men enraged by the persistence of colonial-rooted prejudice, and this is a paradise under siege. Desai is superbly insightful in her rendering of compelling characters. (26)

Though different critics have seen the novel from different points of view, my research will focus on researching the issue of the struggle for identity.

Thus, *The Inheritance of Loss* is much more ambitious than *Hullabaloo* in its spatial breadth and emotional depth. It takes on huge subjects such as morality and justice, globalization, racial, social and economic inequality, fundamentalism and alienation. It takes its reader on a see-saw of negative emotions. There is pathos which often goes hand in hand with revulsion. For example in the description of the judge’s adoration of his dog Mutt, the disappearance of which rocks his whole existence, set against his cruelty to his young wife. There is frequent outrage at the deprivation and poverty in which many of the characters live, including the cook’s son in America. And there is humiliation, for example in the treatment of Sai by her lover-turned-rebel, or Lola, who tries to stand up to the Nepalese rebels.

II. Identity and Crisis

Introduction

Identity has become the central area of concern in cultural studies during the 1990s. Identity is the process how we describe ourselves to each other. Culture creates enormous pressure for conformity today as it is often referred to the individual or group identity. Identity is the meaning or self-concept that one gives to oneself or the meaning in general that human beings give to them. In other words, it is the sum totality of values attached to individuals by an age and a community, in terms of their class, caste, group or culture and institution of any kind. Relating to this issue, Stuart Hall in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* finds at least two different ways of thinking about cultural identity as:

The first position defines 'cultural identity' in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one' 'true' self, hiding inside many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves; which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Cultural identity, in the second sense, is a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, times, history and culture. (111-12)

Individuals make their own identity, but not under conditions of their own choosing. In fact, identities are often created in the crucible of colonialism, racial and sexual subordination, and national conflicts, but also in the specificity of group histories and structural position.

The problems involved in trying to live with multiple identities helps to generate endless discourses about the process of finding or constructing a coherent identity. Yet in contrast to those arguments which assume that the logic of modernity

is to produce an increasingly narrow individualism, a narcissistic preoccupation with individual identity which was common in the 1970s today we find arguments which emphasize the search for a strong collective identity, some new form of community, within modern societies.

Many theorists also agree that no less than four of the forms of identity so powerful today were invented as if from scratch in the modern period: race, arguably originating with Kant's anthropological writings and made possible by the developments in biological explanation; class, emerging as an objective social location only with the emergence of capitalism; nationality, produced along with the development of the nation-state ; and sexuality, which developed as an identity rather than a practice in the context of the creation of alternative communities in which individuals could develop whole ways of life in new and different forms.

Identity

Our identities are never discovered. They are always constituted, constructed, invented, imagined, imposed, projected, suffered, and celebrated. Identities are never univocal, stable or innocent. They are always an accomplishment and a ceaseless project. For this reason, in the process of constituting them and negotiating them, we discover that we have become or are now something that has little resemblance to what we thought we have become, and perhaps are reluctant to face, enters another factor: namely, how we get a glimpse or take a glance at that identity that was and that we have become. Identities have a lot to do with images, imaginaries and the imagination.

There is considerable interest in the question of identity, perhaps equalled only by the considerable confusion around the question of why identities to exert such power, and whether they should be acknowledged and legally recognized or simply

ignored in the hope that they will disappear. Everyone seems to agree that social identities such as ethnicity, sexuality and nationality have come to the center of political mobilization since the United States' culture revolution of the 1960s; and many construe recent global conflicts as centered around differences in fundamental aspects of cultural identity.

Identities are both imposed and self-made, produced through the interplay of names and social roles foisted on us by dominant narratives together with the particular choices. Families, communities and individuals make over how to interpret, and resist, those impositions as well as how to grapple with their real historical experiences. But the social meanings attached to such things as skin color and body shape; the hierarchies of language and differential roles in reproduction, and the very significance accorded various identity markers are firmly in place when a given individual is born, circumscribing their flexibility and invoking a constellation of meanings that will come into play by their appearance, or their birth certificate. To understand identities then, we need to study psychology, culture, politics, and economics, as well as philosophy and history.

Thus identities need to be analyzed not only in their cultural location but also in relation to historical epoch. The constellation of practices, beliefs about identity, the lived experiences associated with various identities and the legal or formal recognitions of identity not only undergo constant change but can produce truly new forms of identity. Identities are the product of discourses that regulate the individual's worldly perception. They are not things which exist simply there with universal qualities, rather they are discursive constructions. Thus, in this sense, identities are constituted or made. Identity is never a peaceful acquisition, it is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by another identity or by

erasing of identities. Identity, therefore, can be defined as a set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group. The quality or condition of being the same as something else.

Personal Identity

Much of the debate about identity in recent decades has been about personal identity, and specifically about personal identity over time, but identity generally, and the identity of things of other kinds, have also attracted attention. Various interrelated problems have been at the centre of discussion, but it is fair to say that recent work has focussed particularly on the following areas: The notion of a criterion of identity; the correct analysis of identity over time, and, in particular, the disagreement between advocates of perdurance and advocates of endurance as analyses of identity over time.

Personal identity deals with questions about ourselves *qua* people (or persons). Many of these questions are familiar ones that occur to everyone at some time. What am I? When did I begin? What will happen to me when I die? Discussions of personal identity go right back to the origins of Western philosophy and most major figures have had something to say about it. We often speak of one's "personal identity" as what makes one the person one is. Our identity, in this sense, consists roughly of those properties that make you unique as an individual and different from others. It is the way we see or define ourself. It may also be the network of values and convictions that structure our life. We might call it our individual psychological identity. Our individual psychological identity is a property and presumably one that we have only contingently. We might have had a different identity from the one we in fact have. Likewise, it is a property that we might have for a while and then lose. We could acquire a new individual identity, or perhaps even carry on without one.

In philosophy, personal identity refers to the essence of a self-conscious person, that which makes him or her uniquely what they are at any one point in time, and which further persists over time despite superficial modifications, making him or her same person at different points in time also. The question regarding personal identity has addressed the conditions under which a person at one time is the same person at another time, known as personal continuity. This sort of analysis of personal identity provides a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the identity of the person over time. In the modern philosophy of mind, this concept of personal identity is sometimes referred to as the diachronic problem of personal identity. The synchronic problem is grounded in the question of what features or traits characterize a given person at one time. On the issue of the legitimacy of identity Paul Brodwin says:

It's an important thought experiment, and it illustrates the major point. To claim a certain identity always implies certain rights and obligations. To specify what counts as legitimate belonging will affect how people respect such rights or enforce these obligations. Specifying who counts as a citizen precedes conventional judgments of what a nation and its citizens owe each other and what sort of moral claim they have on each other. (11)

Personal identity is the way in which people define themselves in terms of their individuality and difference to others. This might include factors such as age, gender, nationality, culture, religious affiliation, disability, sexuality, interests, talents, personality traits, and family and friendship networks. The way in which a person sees themselves in relation to those around them, and what makes them unique, are all aspects of personal identity. Part of our personal identity is given to us at birth, such

as gender, nationality and genetic history. Other aspects of our personal identity are formed during our early years of development and continue to develop during our life as we grow, mature, make choices, forge relationships and build an evolving identity for ourselves.

John Locke considered personal identity (or the self) to be founded on consciousness, and not on the substance of either the soul or the body. According to Locke, personal identity (the self) depends on consciousness, not on substance nor on the soul. We are the same person to the extent that we are conscious of our past and future thoughts and actions in the same way as we are conscious of our present thoughts and actions. Locke's conception of personal identity finds it not on the substance or the body, but in the same continued consciousness.

The persistence question, the question of what personal identity over time consists in, is literally a question of life and death. Answers to it determine, insofar as that is possible, the conditions under which we survive, or cease to exist in the course of certain adventures. These adventures do not have to be theoretically as fancy as the cases, of human fission or brain swaps. The theory of personal identity tells us whether we can live through the acquisition of complex cognitive capacities in our development from fetus to person. Furthermore, theories of personal identity have ethical and metaphysical implications of considerable magnitude in conjunction with certain normative premises. It is not surprising that most great philosophers have attempted to solve the problem of personal identity, or have committed themselves to metaphysical systems that have substantial implications with regards to the problem, and that most religious belief systems give explicit answers to the persistence question. Neither is it surprising that virtually everybody holds a pre-theoretical

theory of personal identity. We are concerned, in other words, with the truth-makers of personal identity statements.

National and Cultural Identity

For the past two centuries or more, a good deal of rhetoric and a not inconsiderable amount of blood have been expended to demonstrate that our national identity is the primary form of identity available to us; that it underlies and informs all our other identities, and that in case of conflict it should take priority over them. Many people have been prepared to sacrifice, not only themselves but those dear to them, and have put the claims of the nation ahead of the demands of religion, political commitment and morality. We now need to ask: what is it about national identity which has rendered these claims and sacrifices so terribly plausible?

The beginnings of an answer to this question were provided by one of the very first theorists of nationalism, Johann Gottlieb Herder. Herder argued that a nation is constituted through its language and culture. He emphasized the significance of the practices, customs and rituals of everyday life, and of the stories, folk beliefs and myths in terms of which people make sense of their lives. Indeed, he can claim to be one of the first theorists of what we now call “popular culture”. The most fundamental constituent of a culture was the language in which these stories, beliefs and myths find expression. Language and culture were not, herder argued, merely aspects of the social environment within which people made their lives; they were constitutive of their very identity. Ross Poole defines identity on the basis of culture and language, “The most fundamental constituent of a culture was the language in which these stories, beliefs and myths find expression. Language and culture were not merely aspects of the social environment within which people made their lives, they were constitutive of their very identity” (271). Human identity exists only in a framework

of interpretation. It's basic framework is provided by the language and cultural symbols in terms of which we become aware of ourselves and of other.

Part of the secret of national identity lies in the emergence of vernacular print languages, their spread through large numbers of the population, and their coming to play a privileged role in public and private life. As these languages formed the identities of those who lived in a particular region, they provided the foundation for a shared sense of belonging to the same community. The language and cultural symbols through which we now understand who we are may be relatively recent phenomena, but for most of us they have come to provide an inescapable structure of experience. A national identity provides us with a specific moral agenda. National identity, is often used as an argument for the existence of special obligations. National identity has served as a reason to ignore morally more urgent demands outside the borders of one's own nation.

A major source of the strength of national identity has been in its inescapability. For much of the 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 cultural means are necessary for the articulation of the sense of self of its members. The fusion of language, culture and polity defined by the nation has so entered our conception of ourselves that it becomes difficult to address the question of who we are except in terms which presuppose that we already have a national identity. As we come to have a sense of who we were, we form a conception of ourselves and belonging to a particular nation.

The identity of an individual or a particular group of people is a bio-sociological factor outside the will of that individual or group, but which is meaningful only when it is expressed in relation to other individuals or other groups.

The dialectical character of identity lies in the fact that an individual or a group is only similar to certain individuals or groups if it is also different to other individuals or groups. Amilcar Cabral talks about the changing nature of identity as:

An identity, individual or collective, is at the same time the affirmation and denial of a certain number of characteristics which define the individuals 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)

Cultural identity does not always take the form of national identity. Social identity is how we function within many different social situations and relate to a range of other people. Social groups may involve family, ethnic communities, cultural connections, nationality, friends and work. They are an important and valued part of our daily life. How we see ourselves in relation to our social groupings defines our social identity.

Placing the issue of identity in a socio-historical location, Linda Martin Alcoff says:

Identities need to be analyzed not only in their cultural location but also in relation to historical epoch. The constellation of practices, beliefs about identity, the lived experiences associated with various identities, and legal or formal recognitions of identity not only undergo constant change but can produce truly new forms of identity. (3)

Several closely related practical and theoretical questions concerning identity emerge from current debates about cultural diversity. If multiculturalism is to be a goal for educational and political institutions, we need a workable notion of how a social group is unified by a common culture, as well as group is unified by a common culture, as well as the ability to identify genuine cultural differences across groups.

The most basic questions about identity call for a more general reexamination of the relation between personal experience and public meanings- subjective choices and evaluation, on the one hand, and objective social location, on the other.

Recent theoretical writings on cultural identity have focused on the status of our personal experiences, examining the claims to representativeness, we might make on their behalf. The two dominant alternative views on cultural identity- the view associated with identity politics and characterized as essentialism and the position of postmodernism- are in fact seen as providing conflicting definitions of identity because they understand the relation between the experiences of social actors and the theoretical construct we call “their identify” very differently. Simply put, the essentialist view would be that the identity common to members of a social group is stable and more or less unchanging, since it is based on the experiences they share. Opponents of essentialism often find this view seriously misleading, since it ignores historical changes and glosses over internal differences within a group by privileging only the experiences that are common to everyone. Postmodernists, in particular, insist that identities are fabricated and constructed rather than self evidently deduced from experience, since- they claim- experience cannot be a source of objective knowledge.

The term nationality, in its etymology, simply means that a person is born (natus) in a certain place. Nothing more, nothing less, and certainly nothing to fight or die about. Nationality becomes something obnoxious when the words ‘roots’ and ‘identity’ are attached to it with mystically charged implications. The process of attributing roots to people (fixing them to the soil) and ascribing to them a frozen identity (personal, cultural, etc.) found its accomplishment through the coming to dominance of the nation state. From that moment, the word ‘roots’ became associated

with absorbing and propagating the dominant culture of the national state (the fatherland) and the word 'identity' came to be a shorthand for national identity. A series of changes, i.e. impositions and restrictions, were then introduced, through which the concepts of roots, identity and nationality became glorified and codified.

In the first half of the twentieth century, some states like fascist Italy and communist Soviet Union introduced measures to attach people to the soil, as in the feudal system, by issuing internal passports to restrict movements of people from rural to urban areas. Besides that, in almost every country, the introduction of the passport differentiated between people born in different regions of the world, making more difficult, and so discouraging, moving and intermingling, rooting people to the place where they happened to be born. This identity provides them with a land in which they feel at home, a history which is theirs, and privileged access to a vast heritage of culture and creativity. It not only provides them with the means to understand this heritage, it also assures them that it is theirs.

To make a historical parallel, in some places, during the Middle Ages, people were assigned the same religion as the master in which territory they happened to be born. Now people are generally and automatically given the nationality of the state in whose territory they are born, with all the juridical obligations and compulsions that follow from it; a situation not really different from the one in the Middle Ages. In the course of history, some people, without moving from their place of birth, found themselves changing nationality (sometimes more than once) just because of the intromission of a different state ruling power. Perhaps, future generations, pondering on these facts, would consider personal freedom under the nation state on the par with that of the serfs under the feudal system, that is very limited indeed. In the world of nation states, nationality, based on attached and fixed roots and ascribed or imposed

cultural identity, froze people into rival groups (natives - foreigners) and gave rise to senseless destructive conflicts. These absurd distinctions, deviously manufactured, have to disappear, taking with them the terms 'roots' and 'identity' as applied to human beings.

The citizen's relationship with the state-the nation-state is constituted by his or her national identity. It is this which provides the commitment, both in one's fellow citizens and to the political institutions, necessary for public life. It also provided the motivation for some level of participation. It involves a measure of identification with the political community to which one belongs, and a readiness to override one's more private and local concerns in order to act on behalf of that community. In the modern world, it has been the nation which has provided the requisite identity and motivation. Becoming a citizen has involved acquiring the appropriate cultural identity.

Our national identity is a nearly inescapable condition of our life that it provides the freedom, not of choice, but of necessity: of acting as we must. But it also promises another form of freedom: that of living in a political and social world which we can identify as our own. When we are free in this sense, we are at home in our world, in a community with others who speak the same language, experience the same emotions, and experience the world in the same terms. It is this sense of individual freedom which underlies the familiar appeal of nationalism- the claim of each nation to be its own state. The force of this appeal lies in the aspiration of members of the national community to live in society which expresses and sustains their fundamental sense of self. When this aspiration is fulfilled, the social and political environment is not experienced as a constraint on the individual's interests and concerns, but a condition of a worth while and satisfying life.

Cultural identity is the sense of man as a political animal. This part deals with the problems related to general social issues and the economic embarrassment for a new comer in a modern but quite unfamiliar environment. The cross-cultural experiences give us an outline, although not a panorama, of the cultural identity problem. Our national identity comes to us in the language in which we learn to articulate our most primitive demands. As we learn to speak, we find ourselves already spoken for. If, in our later life, the market and its associated institutions contribute to our sense of national identity this is not because of their character as rational economic activity, but because the transactions are preformed in the language of cultural forms and modes of interaction characteristic of the nation. We are provided with access to a store of cultural achievement, a history of triumph and tragedy, and a land, all of which go well beyond the possibilities of our individual or local aspirations but which are nevertheless defined as ours. Our national identity- any identity, for that matter- would not be able to demand sacrifices of us, if it did not also provide us with pleasures and satisfaction.

The process of intensified flows of people from the ex-colonial countries to the Western metropolitan centre in the postwar era has made us increasingly conscious of the colonial aspect of the development of modernity and the question of cultural identity. The inward movement of people, as well as images and information from places which for many in the west were constructed through oversimplified racist and exotic stereotypes of "the other" means that new levels of complexity are introduced to the formulation of notions of identity, cultural tradition, community and nation. This challenges the notion of now-way flows from the centre to the peripheries, as the dominant centers in the west become not only importers of raw materials and goods, but of people too. The visibility and vociferousness of the rest in

the West means that cultural differences once maintained between societies now exist within them. The unwillingness of migrants to passively absorb the dominant cultural mythology of the nation or locality raises issues of multiculturalism and the fragmentation of identity.

Global Identity

Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. The processes and actions to which the concept of globalization now refers have been proceeding, with some interruptions, for many centuries, but the main focus of the discussion of globalization is on relatively recent times. In so far as that discussion is closely linked to the contours and nature of modernity, globalization refers quite clearly to the recent developments. Globalization is conceived in much broader terms than that, but its main empirical focus is in line with the increasing acceleration in both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole in the twentieth century. But it is necessary to emphasize that globalization is not equated with or seen as a direct consequence of an amorously conceived modernity.

Today identity is an issue of studying into the ethnic, class, gender, race, sexuality, and sub-cultures. Globalization has increased the rate of cultural amalgamation into various forms of identity crisis. Ethnic identity refers to a person's sense of belonging to an ethnic group. Ethnic identity is drawn from the realisation that a person's thoughts, perceptions, feelings and behaviours are consistent with those of other members of the ethnic group. Ethnic identity recognises that a person belongs to a particular group that shares not only ethnicity but common cultural practices. Cultural differences should be celebrated, embraced and acknowledged by adoptive families. This can include celebrating special occasions, visits to the child's

country of origin and establishing social networks with children of similar ethnic and cultural background.

In a world of many despondent people, dependently performing dull work, deep seated needs of security and belongingness were stirred and conveyed by two words that had quite a large appeal and still evoke positive feelings. These words are 'roots' and 'identity'. Our national identity was not chosen but determined by the contingencies of birth and upbringing. It is this very contingency which makes this identity seem morally suspect

With reference to human beings, roots basically means to have a firm ground (physical, cultural) to which one is firmly anchored. In contrast, to have no roots, to be 'déraciné,' is considered an unfortunate situation, like floating aimlessly in the air, in a state of psychological malaise and uneasiness. To have no roots is believed also similar to having no identity, to be a phantom with no face, no legible past and no foreseeable future. In actual fact, having an identity has now become like a byword for existing. All this seems quite unobjectionable. A more careful and critical examination of these two terms brings to the fore less appealing aspects.

For instance, the naturalistic image of having roots should mean that, like a tree, a person is bound to the soil, incapable of moving. So, to compare the dynamic human being to a fixed vegetable specimen does not seem a compliment at all. As for identity, the word comes from the Latin "idem" meaning 'the same' or "identidem" that means 'repeatedly,' 'in the same way.' Referring to a human being, these characteristics do not seem to portray very appealing or interesting traits. In actual fact, the healthy human being is a person in a process of becoming, playing different roles in synchrony and harmony with a changing environment. One of the basic features of the living and flourishing individual is the ability to adapt and this requires

a fit (i.e. appropriate) flexibility not a fixed (i.e. frozen) identity. But, the real trouble with these two words, roots and identity, and the main reason for suggesting they be dropped from the vocabulary of the social sciences, derives from their association with the word 'nationality.' Mike Featherstone points out the problem of immigrants seeing for their roots as:

The unwillingness of migrants to passively absorb the dominant cultural, mythology of the nation or locality raises issues of multiculturalism and the fragmentation of identity. In some cases this provokes intensified and extremist nationalist reactions, leading to a complex series of reactions on the part of immigrants. (353)

In order to firmly root and control somebody, the state needed to clearly identify him/her, and so identity cards and all sort of documents and papers were invented to register each and every person subjected to a central state power. In some countries (Italy), everybody has to carry an identity document at all times, otherwise they might be stopped and detained by the state police. To have no identity (stateless person) or many identities (cosmopolitan person) or an identity that does not match with the (national) one imposed or accepted by the state, is a sure recipe for trouble especially in times of insecurity and nationalistic frenzy. Identity is also forced upon individuals by a system of cultural indoctrination, when the ruling clique dictate on everybody the acceptance of the same language and laws. As a matter of fact, the national identity is essentially a manufactured identity, obtained by crushing local cultures, rather than a real common bond joining people living next to each other.

Children who have been separated from their family or country of origin may become confused about their personal and social identities. They may have experienced a number of moves, been cared for by different people in different places,

lost important contacts and relationships from their past, been separated from family, friends and their ethnic and cultural networks. Feeling or being made to feel different is a major issue for children who have been adopted, particularly for children from diverse cultural backgrounds or with a disability. For the adopted child, the stigma of not living with their birth family, living as a cultural or ethnic minority and becoming accustomed to what it means to be adopted are lifelong adjustments.

A good number of recent studies illustrate how cultural identities, as other social representations, are socially produced and not passively inherited legacies. Representations of identities are continuously produced by individual and collective social actors who constitute and transform themselves through both these very symbolic practices, and their relations (alliance, competition, struggle, negotiation, etc.) with other social actors. In the present age of globalization there are practically no fully isolated social units. Although some exceptions may exist, most social aggregates, or at least some social actors within them, are in one way or another internationally and/or transnationally linked. According to the scope of their practices social actors may be classified in local, regional, national international, transnational and global.

So far as concerned identity of diasporas, their actual identity gets slightly changed in course of scattering from place to place and time to again. Language, memory and religion are the main controversial aspects of the diasporic people. In most cases, the homeland language has disappeared from usage in face of the pressure of the dominant language. So identity is fortified by national narratives connected with the homeland, including periods of glory and tragedy. But it is also the case that people always want to keep their collective identities wherever they go. However they have faced and familiar with other religion, cultures, customs in course of their

settling. Their cultural identity is powerful though it has been mingled with others' culture and identities.

For several decades, anthropology has participated in the general deconstruction of identity as a stable object of scholarly inquiry. The notion that individuals craft their identity through social performances, and hence that their identity is not a fixed essence, fundamentally drives current research into gender and sexuality. The notion that collective identity emerges out of political struggle and compromise underlies contemporary studies of race, ethnicity and nationalism. The anti-essentialist mood of today's anthropology fits with wider currents in philosophy as well as feminism and cultural studies.

It should be noted that in the course of debate about modernization in the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, the issues of post-modernity or post-modernization was diffusely raised. That, in turn, was to feed into the developing debate about post-industrial society, which has become part of the modernity-and-post-modernity debate of recent years. However, we need onto here only that that question of post-modernity arose in the debate about modernization primarily in terms of the relatively simple notion that there must be something after modernity. Modernization was much more fluid and subjective as well as cultural, than the objective approach of many mainstream modernization theorists. The project of modernization was particularly prone to various dilemmas as to which images of modernity should guide them and from where, in relation to the important issue of national identity, they should select the pieces of such images. All societies, implicated in projects of modernization, are also involved in processes of interactive comparison with other societies. In that perspective "modernization" has been an ongoing problem for virtually all societies.

If globalization refers to the process where by the world increasingly becomes seen as “one place” and the ways in which we are made conscious of this process then the cultural changes which are thematized under the banner of the postmodern seem to point in the opposite direction by directing us to consider the local. It should not be taken to imply that there is, or will be, a unified world society of culture-something akin to the social structure of a nation-state and its national culture, only writ large. It is possible to refer to the development of a global culture in a less totalistic sense by referring to two aspects of the process of globalization.

First, we can point to the existence of a global culture in the restricted sense of “third cultures”, sets of practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions and lifestyles that have developed in ways which have become increasingly independent of nation states. Second, we can talk about a global culture in the semolina sense that the globe is a finite, knowable bounded space, a field into which all nation-states and collectivities will inevitably be drawn. Here the globe, the planet earth, acts both as a limit and as the common bounded space on which our all nation-states and collectivities will inevitably be drawn. Here the globe, the planet earth, acts both as limit and as the common bounded space on which our encounters and practices are inevitably grounded.

The changes which are taking place as a result of the current phases of intensified globalization can be understood as provoking reactions that seek to rediscover particularity, localism and difference which generate a sense of the limits to the culturally unifying, ordering and integrating projects associated with western modernity. So in one sense it can be argued that globalization produces postmodernism.

The present concern with globality and globalization cannot be comprehensively considered simply as an aspect of outcome of the western “project” of modernity or, except in very broad terms, enlightenment. In an increasingly globalized world there is a heightening of civilization, societal, ethnic. There are constraints on social entities to locate themselves within world history at the global future. Yet globalization, in and of itself, also involves the diffusion of the expectation of such identity declarations.

The success of globalization led to the transformation of culture, or cultural change, which refers to the dynamic process whereby the living cultures of the world are changing and adapting to external or internal forces. This process is occurring within Western culture as well as non-Western and indigenous culture of the world. Forces which contribute to the cultural change include colonization, globalization, advances in communication, transportation and infrastructure improvements, and military expansion. In many cases, however, indigenous people have not passively acceded to the penetration of extractive capitalism into their communities.

Technological innovations resulting due to globalization can enhance, displace or devalue human existence and culture. Advances in medical technology have contributed to a new demographic changes, including increased longevity and decreasing fertility. It is fair to say that the impact of globalization in the cultural sphere has, most generally, been viewed in a pessimistic light. Typically, it has been associated with the destruction of cultural identities, victims of the accelerating encroachment of a homogenized, westernized, consumer culture. This view, the constituency for which extends from academics to anti-globalization activists tends to interpret globalization as a seamless extension of or a euphemism for western cultural

imperialism. Talking about the existence of a third culture because of globalization,

Mike Featherstone says:

We can point to the existence of a global culture in the restricted sense of 'third cultures.' It is a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions and lifestyles that have developed in ways which have become increasingly independent of nation-states. There are a number of trans-societal institutions, cultures and cultural producers who cannot be understood as merely agents and representatives of their nation-states. (350)

The way in which identities were or might have been constituted, how they are presently being constituted; how they are presently being constituted; the shift in the means and objects for their representation have become plural and the equally urgent questions about the transformation in the conceptual tools for reflecting on those images and representations of identities.

III. The Odyssey for Identity

The Anglophile Judge: Identity Problem

Identity involves a link between the personal and the social relationships. Although as individuals we have to take up identities actively, those identities are necessarily the product of the society in which we live and our relationship with others. Identity provides a link between individuals and the world in which they live. Identity combines how we see our self and how others see us.

In a crumbling house in Kalimpong, in the spectacular Himalayan foothills, Jemubhai lives with his dog and his 17-year-old granddaughter Sai. The judge and Sai are “estranged Indians” who converse in English, knowing little Hindi. The judge's estrangement began as a student in England. He envied the English and despised Indians, slathering powder over his too-brown skin, rejecting his peasant father back in India. He would be hideously cruel to his wife, indirectly causing her death.

Justice Jemubhai Patel is the epitome of a faded ideal of British civilization in independent India. He became successful as a judge in postcolonial India where his English education was an asset. But, his education also led him to absorb habits that estranged him from his Indian heritage and culture. Jemubhai Patel is a retired judge from the prestigious Indian Civil Service, the British Empire's old “steel frame.” In pre-independence India, Indian Civil Service comprised of a few hundred white civil servants who had administered the subcontinent with the help of a handful of Indians. It was the backbone that administered India during the British Raj era.

In his retirement, he is so embittered and contemptuous towards his countrymen that the only genuine affection he feels is for his dog, Mutt. He disliked his countrymen so much that, “He retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a

shadow” (39). He became a shadow of his former self. The judge, Jemubhai, seemed to have had his heart frozen long ago when he studied at Cambridge University and learned to despise his fellow Indians.

Coming from humble origins in colonial India, Jemubhai Popatlal Patel, “would be the first boy of their community to go to an English university” (89). From his ancestral town of Piphit, “Mr. J. P. Patel, *SS Strathnaver*” (35), would travel to the Bombay docks and set sail for Liverpool in the year 1939. From Liverpool he would go to Cambridge, the prestigious university where ordinary Indians had only hoped and dreamed of going. This odyssey of Jemubhai Patel, from Piphit to Cambridge would bring about a complete transformation within him, changing him for ever.

In 1939 Jemubhai was twenty, and most of the Indian students at Cambridge were nationalist and rooting for independence, but Patel had come to see Indian relationships, culture, and dark skin as inferior. Alienated from himself, he “learned to take refuge in the third person to keep everyone at bay, to keep even himself away from himself, like the queen” (43).

Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* says, “In every country of the world there are climbers, ‘the ones who forget who they are’, and, in contrast to them, ‘the ones who remember where they came from’” (37). As a student, isolated in racist England, Jemubhai chooses to be a climber and embrace the Anglo culture whole heartedly. Jemubhai had come to see his Indian relationships, culture and dark skin as inferior. He avoided Indian friends or connections and gradually retreated into a shell of his own making and thinking as:

Thus Jemubhai’s mind had begun to wrap; he grew stranger to himself then he was to those around him, found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar. He forgot how to laugh, could barely manage to

lift his lips in a smile, and if he ever did, he held his hand over his mouth, because he could not bear anyone to his gums, his teeth. They seemed too private. [...]. To the end of his life, he would never be seen without socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light, faded days to sunny, for he was suspicious that sunlight might reveal him, in his hideousness, all too clearly. (40)

In England, after his name was published for admission to the prestigious Indian Civil Service, Jemubhai Patel ('James' to his landlady) began to shed his Indian culture and identity. The opportunity to emulate a British lifestyle led him to mimic his masters. There was only one way to go now and that was forward. Desai writes, "He envied the English. He loathed Indians. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English and Indians both" (119). Jemubhai, the young Judge wrote home to India on completing his university examinations in Britain in English. His parents had to consult the assistant magistrate regarding the meaning of his letter. His parents had not realized that their learned Jemubhai was morphing into an English man.

We may share personality traits with other people, but sharing an identity suggests some active engagement on our part. We choose to identify with a particular identity or group. Sometimes we have more choice than others. Identity requires some awareness on our part. In this situation, Jemubhai choose to identify with the British and discarded his Indian identity.

The Judge who returned to India from Cambridge was a totally different Jemubhai from Piphit that had left the Bombay docks in 1939. He had become an anglophile, a non-British but who liked Britain and British things very much. After

returning he treated his wife with unusual cruelty and violence despising her Indian backwardness. He also abandoned his daughter to convent boarding school, eventually cutting her off completely when she married a Parsi. On his seclusion with his family members, Mandira Sen writes, “He had broken his ties with his parents, extended family, and community of Patel’s who had seen him off on his voyage to Cambridge University with great fanfare and hopes of general betterment”(191).

Identity involves the internal and the subjective, and the external. It is a socially recognized position, recognized by others, not just by us. There is some active engagement by those who take up identities and being the same as some people and different from others, as indicated by symbols and representations. There lies a tension between how much control we have in constructing our identities and how much control or constraint is exercised over us. Jemubhai was always in a flux as to what his true identity was.

Embittered and estranged, after retirement Jemubhai Patel moved to the hill station of Kalimpong, where the temperate climate meant that one was not part of tropical, mainstream India. The British built cottages there and gave play to their gardening genius. They encouraged purveyors of the necessities for a colonial lifestyle, such as bakeries that produced the cakes, breads, and biscuits so necessary for a decent tea.

Jemubhai had bought a cottage, Cho Oyu, from a Scot who had built it and was now leaving India. Paralleling the life of the Judge, Cho Oyu was extremely run down and badly in need of restoration. Termites had steadily started chewing at the cottage’s wooden frame, its once beautiful wooden floors and extreme cold permeated everything. Jemubhai wasn’t blind to the decay that surrounded him, but in fact embraced it. The judge’s stern cruelty is facade to alienation that fills the interstices of

contempt for his homeland, the condescension of imperial culture, and his isolation that is their product.

In the end, Jemubhai is one of those "ridiculous Indians," as the novel puts it, "who couldn't rid themselves of what they had broken their souls to learn" (43), and whose Anglophilia can only turn into self-hatred. These Indians are also an unwanted anachronism in postcolonial India, where long-suppressed peoples have begun to awaken to their dereliction, to express their anger and despair.

Jemubhai Popatlal Patel who was, "born to a family of the peasant caste" (56), transforms into a person who, "dressed for dinner even in the jungle, in black dinner jacket and bow tie" (60). Discarding and shedding his Indian identity, Jemubhai Patel became English in taste, opinion, morals and intellect. Through Jemubhai, we experience the post-colonial era in all the cruelty of its old, ingrained hatreds and prejudices.

The Global Immigrant

Personality describes qualities that individuals may have, such as being outgoing or shy, internal characteristics, but identity requires some elements of choice. We may be characterized by having personality traits, but we have to identify with that is, actively take up an identity. We tend to have the same identity as one group of people and a different one from others. In this case Biju aspires to be a global citizen with an American identity. In New York, the cook's son Biju, an illegal, is doing menial restaurant work. Biju, son of the judge's drunken cook, is struggling to make an illicit life in the cellars and basements of the city. The cook, who clings to old superstitions while dreaming of electric toasters, had pushed him to emigrate.

Balwinder Singh alias Biju is the son of the Judge's cook. Generations of Biju's ancestors had been cooks. The cook did not want Biju to carry on the family

tradition and sent him to America with great struggle, in the hope of a better life. Putting his faith in the promise of modernity, Biju forgets the harshness of his life as a servant's son and dreams of a life of prosperity in America. When Biju was leaving the cook had said, "Stay there. Make money. Don't come back here" (191).

Biju was desperate to go to America. After Biju is duped, along with many others, by an agency supposedly recruiting waiters, cooks, and cleaners for a cruise ship, he manages to get a tourist visa on the basis of an application that is entirely fabricated. The local doctor, whose son, like Biju, is going to America, creates a fake record of Biju's inoculations. It was his passport to freedom and wealth.

The cook and Biju belonged to the lower class of society and are bracketed under the 'poor' category. For a poor person it is very difficult to create an identity. They search for their identity by looking up at their masters. Lack of faith in India forces Biju to America. Had he remained in India he would have struggled, just like his father. Both, father and son believed that to create an identity of their own, an American green card was necessary. After receiving his visa a bystander had told Biju, "You are the luckiest boy in the whole world" (187).

But the cruel irony in the novel is that the pattern merely repeats itself. The 'lucky boy' Biju's status as an illegal immigrant compels him to work as a kitchen hand for pitiful wages, just like his father. Instead of the green card, Biju gets the identity as an illegal immigrant, spending much of his time dodging the authorities, moving from one ill-paid job to another. In a verbal argument with his employer Harish-Harry, Biju says, "This is how you make your money, paying us nothing because you know we can't do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal. Why don't you sponsor us for our green cards?" (188).

Stumbling from one low-paid restaurant job to another, living in seedy squalor with groups of other immigrant men, Biju imagines what life would be like with “a sofa, TV and a bank account” (175). Spurred on by his father, Biju came to the States thinking he could achieve the American dream and carve an identity, but the reality is quite different.

Biju, knocks around from restaurant to restaurant in Manhattan, staying in rat-infested hovels and coming into frequent contact with fellow Indian immigrants. Biju's forerunners like to press the question of “what he is doing and why. It hadn't even been a question before he left. Of course, if you could go, you went, of course, if you could, you stayed” (241). Biju is so confused with himself that he finds it difficult to have a conversation even with the Indian girls to whom he delivers a take away meal. It seems that positive changes are not forthcoming for the likes of Biju in America, because as “illegals” he has no political rights.

Biju was also linked with the wealthy Indians who used to dine at the restaurants that employed him. They were all non-resident Indians living in “*Amreeka*”. But they refused to recognize Biju as a compatriot and were careful to maintain their distance. He was left puzzled and bewildered and it seemed that positive change was not forth coming for the likes of Biju in America, because as ‘illegals’ he had no political rights and no identity. Confused, Biju contemplates staying on in America as:

And if he continued on here? What would happen? Would he, like Harish-Harry, manufacture a fake version of himself and using what he had created as clues, understand himself backward? Life was not about him for him anymore, and death-what would even that mean to him?

(268)

Biju eventually becomes, “a man full to the brim with a wish to live within a narrow purity.” For him, the city’s endless possibilities for self-invention become a source of pain. Though “another part of him had expanded: his self-consciousness, his self-pity,” this awareness only makes him long to fade into insignificance, to return “to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his own destiny” (232).

The blinding desire for a better life just becomes an illusion for Biju. He either lived miserably in rat-infested hovels as an illegal immigrant struggling with his cultural identity when he is shocked to see Hindu Indians ordering beef. He forever seemed to be at the mercy of soulless embassy bureaucrats and heartless restaurant bosses. Every day, all day, life became a continuous struggle for, “the luckiest boy in the whole wide world” (187). Like many migrants, Biju forgets the harshness of his life as a servant's son, and recalls only the most sensuous textures: minarets, bangles, *samosas*, riverside, sugar cane.

He had come to “*Amreeka*” with colossal dreams for a better future and back home his father boasted to everyone he met, “My son works in New York. In that country, there is enough food for everybody” (84). The cook never knew that Biju was an illegal migrant in America. The reality was that Biju, was living in New York, eking out a bare existence waiting tables and sleeping in a basement even as his father imagined him to be amassing wealth and prestige. Seeing Biju helpless and struggling, Mr. Kakkar says:

America is in the process of buying up the world. Go back, you’ll find they own the businesses. One day you’ll be working for an American company there or here. Think of your children. If you stay here, your son will earn a hundred thousand dollars for the same company he could be working for in India but making one thousand dollars. How,

then, can you send your children to the best international college? You are making a big mistake. Still a world, my friend, where one side travels to be a servant and other side travels to be treated like a king.

You want your son to be on this side or that side? (269)

That is a choice Biju has to make. But as things grow desperate in Kalimpong, Biju returns home, hurtling into his father's arm, dashing and crushing the hope of both of them. Biju, working in a series of deadend jobs, epitomizes the plight of people who have no future in their own country and who endure deplorable conditions and semi-servitude working as illegal immigrants in the US.

In the end Biju realizes that to leave your country is to lose and to stay put is to lose too. It is not an easy choice. The identity he craved for now seemed an illusion. Biju, convinced that his father needs him, returns to Kalimpong when he hears of the political disturbances. Arriving back in India in the climactic scenes of the novel, Biju is immediately engulfed by the local eruptions of rage and frustration from which he had been physically remote in New York. He returns not as a hero but as someone who has been robbed of all he had, down to the clothes on his back. For him, withdrawal or escape is no longer possible.

Gyan's Search For Identity

Identity itself seems to be about a question. Who am I? We tend to focus on three key questions when discussing about identity. How are identities formed? How much control do we have in shaping our own identities? Are there particular uncertainties about identity in the contemporary times? We need to think a bit more about what we mean by identity.

If identity provides us with the means of answering the question 'who am I?' it might appear to be about personality. Gyan since childhood was in the process of

identifying himself and the Gorkhaland movement seemed to work as a catalyst in making him search for his identity. The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) agitates for rights and justice for the majority Nepalese. The young unemployed men like Gyan love the mobilization.

Surprised seeing Gyan in Darjeeling in his tomato red sweater yelling, Sai murmurs to herself, “What would he be doing in Darjeeling?! Why would he be at a GNLF rally rallying on behalf of independence for Nepali-Indians?”(215). Gyan, born of poverty and proudly Indian, his family’s house was made of mud with a thatch roof, feels intimidated by Jemu’s very English and superior ways. In the Himalayas, village life is hard at the best of times. Later it deteriorates into chaos and penury even for the advantaged when the Gorkhaland movement takes over the town. As young firebrands rain woes on ordinary folk just trying to get by, the high-faulting’ political rhetoric disguises a mix of jealousy, greed and inchoate quests for identity.

Gyan was a bonafide Nepali speaker of Indian origin, an Indian citizen. But his own country people would treat him and his fellows as second class citizens. The majority of Indians thought that the Nepalis of Darjeeling came from Nepal and were therefore not Indians. As Noni rudely says, “I tell you, these Neps can’t be trusted” (45). They were only soldiers or Gurkhas and as once again Noni adds, “Gorkhas are mercenaries, that’s what they are. Pay them and they are loyal to whatever. There’s no principle involved” (247).

But if we trace history, then we see that Kalimpong along with other parts of Darjeeling was once a unit of Sikkim. While Kalimpong was snatched away by Bhutan for a brief period, other parts of Darjeeling hills were taken over by Nepal and subsequently Darjeeling hills including Kalimpong was taken over by British India. Thus, the region evolved as a melting pot of ethnic diversity for Lepchas, Bhutias,

Nepalis and Bengalis, whom mainstream India seemed to marginalize and alienate always. That's not to say that the lives in this story don't include tenderness and occasional moments of cozy pleasure. They do.

But perhaps Gyan, the young tutor, says it best when he glimpses after failing to find a sense of purpose in history and politics that, "happiness has a smaller location" (198). Gyan, the descendant of a Nepali Gurkha mercenary, is romantically involved with Sai but he eventually recoils from her obvious privilege and falls in with a group of ethnic homegrown movement.

It is this sense of marginalization and the need for an identity in modern India that makes Gyan and other youths like him to join the homegrown ethnic liberation movement under the Gorkha National Liberation Front. They feel this political movement would give them a thrust in creating a distinct ethnic identity.

Pankaj Mishra supports Gyan's move and says, "Not surprisingly, half-educated, uprooted men like Gyan gravitate to the first available political cause in their search for a better way. He joins what sounds like an ethnic nationalist movement largely as an opportunity to vent his rage and frustration" (159).

This rage and frustration was against the Government for neglecting its own citizens. Gyan is involved with a burgeoning Nepalese insurgency, which is fuelled by identity politics and nationalist rhetoric. In practice, however, it becomes an expression of the impotent rage of the disadvantaged, which develops into a violent expression of resentment towards lingering signs of colonialism and privilege.

It is identity politics that Gyan is fighting for. His ancestors "swore allegiance to the Crown" and served for, "over a hundred years of family commitments to the wars of the English" (142). Ethnic Nepalese people were known for their valor and bravery. That is why the cook is surprised and tells Sai, "It is strange the tutor is

Nepali.” Stereotyping the Nepalese people he further adds, “Nepalis make good soldiers, coolies, but they are not so bright at their studies. Not their fault, poor things” (73). Gyan had stood up to erase this stereotypical identity of the Nepalese people. Nationalism, migration, varieties of belonging gives these grand themes an entirely new spin, unearthing their sources in earlier decades.

Gyan is fed up being treated like a minority in the place where they were a majority. He rediscovers his Nepalese heritage and joins the liberation movement because he feels that he has no political rights in India. The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) agitates for rights and justice for the majority Nepalese, the search for an identity in a nation that considered them ‘illegal’.

One leader says, “In our own country, the country we fight for, we are treated like slaves” (159). The poor young unemployed men loved the movement and joined it enraged by the persistence of colonial-rooted prejudice. Desai satirizes their nationalist zeal as, “Money and guns in their pockets. They were living the movies. By the time they were done, they would defeat their fictions and the new films would be based on them ...” (295).

His search for an identity forces Gyan to abandon his blossoming romance with Sai. Gyan is partitioned between love and nation, and he chooses the latter. Gyan is torn between his newfound ethnic loyalties and his delicate courtship of Sai. Gyan also does not like the westernized leanings of Sai like celebrating Christmas or eating ‘cheese toast.’ From a young math tutor, Gyan becomes a firebrand nationalist. Gyan’s commitment to the insurgency offers an ironic contrast with the commitment of his family to the colonial British army in earlier times.

Confusion of Sai in Establishing Her Identity

All of the novel's characters eventually come to share Sai's suspicion that life is more often defined by loss than by fulfillment. Sai has never learned any Indian language. She reads *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Cider with Rosie*, *Life with Father*, and *National Geographic*. She can converse with the cook, who cared for her as a child, only in broken Hindi. She is the product of multiculturalism and postcolonialism, whose rootlessness itself has become a kind of shelter. Therefore, she has no fixed identity.

Sai Mistry is a young girl whose education at an Indian convent school comes to an end in the mid-1980s, when she is orphaned and sent to live with her grandfather, a judge who does not want her and who offers no solace. The death of her parents was under the wheels of a bus in Moscow, where her father was studying to become an astronaut. Sai, the harbinger of love and hope, had arrived unannounced at the doorstep of a grandfather she'd never met. She was thrust from the bleak, regimented, sheltered convent boarding school she was attending into the lush, misty Himalayan city of Kalimpong in Northeastern India, where a growing Nepalese insurgency was about to unravel her life even further.

When Jemu hears that Sai, his orphaned sixteen-year-old granddaughter, will be coming to stay with him, he treats her arrival as a godsend. Sai was a Westernized Indian brought up by English nuns. She was a type of an estranged Indian living in India. Surely Sai could only be an asset to Jemu, who saw himself as unadulterated Anglophile. Sai's father was brought up in a Zoroastrian charity for orphans and her mother had been disowned by the family after she had eloped. With no parents to take care of her, Sai was in a flux about her origins and her roots and identity. The nuns in the convent had realised that Sai was a special problem and they used to say among

themselves, “Poor thing, but what can we do?” (28). At convent, a confused Sai had learnt that:

On top a flat creed: cake was better than *laddoos*. Fork spoon knife better than hands, sipping the blood of Christ and consuming a wafer of his body was more civilized than garlanding a phallic symbol with marigolds. English was better than hindi. (30)

Living in a large, decaying house, her grandfather considered himself more British than Indian, far superior to hard-working but poverty-stricken people like his cook, Nandu, whose hopes for a better life for his son are the driving force in his life. Jemubhai, with his hunting rifles and English biscuits, was an obvious target of the natives led by Gyan. Besides threatening their very lives, the revolution also stymied the fledgling romance between 16-year-old Sai and her Nepalese tutor, Gyan. Even as Sai awakens to possibility, the countryside of disenfranchised awake to political discontent that spreads with the virtue of vengeance in every ethnic direction. Gyan, Sai’s Nepalese tutor, is swept into the maw of this malice, and his and Sai’s chaste and budding love is set in opposition to betrayal and reluctant militancy.

Sai, the orphaned grand daughter of the judge, exiled from the convent to be home schooled, by the delightful Bengali sisters Noni and her sister Lola discovers the first flush of youth, the first pangs of love, with her Nepalese tutor Gyan. Sai and Gyan, never having met anyone like one another, are mutually attracted, and for the first time Sai becomes aware of another world. Though Sai’s romance, at sixteen, with Gyan, her tutor, provides her with an emotional escape from Kalimpong, it soon becomes complicated by Gyan’s involvement with the Gorkha National Liberation Federation, a Nepalese independence movement which quickly becomes violent.

Gyan, was an ethnic Nepalese, loved Sai in return, until he became swept up with a group of insurgents agitating for freedom from India and decided he needs to despise her and her bourgeois ways. Sai and Gyan have difficulty negotiating the complications of love, friendship and their polarizing political principles. Gyan ends up judging Sai for her connivance and her loyalty to the social class she was accidentally born into. Gyan was reluctant to celebrate Christmas with Sai and her grandfather. Gyan even reprimands Sai saying, “christmas!”, “You little fool!”(174). Gyan was not comfortable with Sai and her western leanings and to this Desai narrates that, :Still, Gyan was absolutely sure that she was proud of her behavior: masqueraded it about as shame at her lack of Indianess” (176).

There’s nothing Sai can do to change her fate. All Sai’s achieved is to wake up to the same awareness that the rest of the book’s characters have been struggling with their heritage, culture and identity. Her life does not belong to herself, because the West distorts and robs all those who come into contact with it, now and forever.

The Anglophiles and Their Identity Crisis

Desai’s characters are mired in self-hatred, their Indian identity often making them feel unnecessarily inferior, forced to live in a country where the English have arguably done great harm. Several scenes are also given to friends and neighbors, allowing us access to conversations that range from literary modes (VS Naipaul and writers in English who miswrite India, for example) to ethnic minorities.

The makeshift family neighbors of Jemubhai and Sai included a coterie of Anglophiles who were savvy readers of V.S. Naipaul but who are, perhaps, less aware of how fragile their own social standing is, at least until a surge of unrest disturbs the region. Their circle of oddly named eccentrics, are under threat, their persons insulted, their property requisitioned. Lola and Noni are forced to shelter the GNLF's

followers, who immediately eat up their carefully accumulated store of cold meat and sausages. When daylight comes, the strikers see the large garden, available for “sharing,” and their supporters start building bamboo huts on its edges. When Lola goes to their leader, Pradhan, to protest, she returns home traumatized, wondering what the future holds for her and Noni. She realizes a truth:

All of a sudden, all that they had claimed innocent, fun, funny, not really to matter was proven wrong. It did matter, buying tinned ham roll in a rice and dal country; it did matter to live in a big house and sit beside a heater in the evening, even one that sparked and shocked; it did matter to fly to London and to return with chocolates filled with kirsch; it did matter that others could not. The wealth that seemed to protect them like a blanket was the very thing that left them exposed. They, amid extreme poverty, were baldly richer, and the statistics of difference were being broadcast, they would pay the debt that should be shared with others over many generations. (185)

The opportunity to emulate a British lifestyle is what had drawn many westernized Indians like Lola and Noni to hill stations like Kalimpong, where the climate is different from mainstream India. The British built cottages in Kalimpong gave play to their gardening genius. Lola was a widow and Noni tutored Sai, before Gyan. Their little rose-covered cottage was named Mon Ami and its extensive land houses perhaps the country's first broccoli patch. Being complete anglophiles like Jemubhai, they listened to the BBC on the radio, drinking smuggled cheery brandy.

They were conscious of their class and identity. They ate cheese that Father Booty made in his Swiss dairy that was different from the ones ordinary Indians ate. The sisters also read nineteenth-century British novels and avoided English novels

written by Indian writers. Neither do they read the newer and younger British authors, doubtless because they need their vision of Britain to remain relatively static. Every two years or so, Lola used to travel to England to meet her daughter and bring back to India stocks of knorr packet soups, Oxo stock cubes and underwear from Marks and Spencer. They disliked their Indian identity and roots to a great extent.

The two Anglophile sisters discuss *A Bend in the River*, V. S. Naipaul's powerfully bleak novel about traditional Africa's encounter with the modern world. Lola, whose clothesline sags, "under a load of Marks and Spencer's panties" (47), thinks Naipaul is, "strange. Stuck in the past. . . . He has not progressed. Colonial neurosis, he's never freed himself from it" (116). Lola goes on to accuse Naipaul of ignoring the fact that there is a "new England," a "completely cosmopolitan society" where "chicken tikka masala has replaced fish and chips as the No. 1 takeout dinner" (198).

As further evidence, she mentions her own daughter, a newsreader for BBC radio, who "doesn't have a chip on her shoulder" (197). Discarding her Indian identity, Lola is proud of her daughter's British-accented voice, which is "triumphant over any horrors the world might thrust upon others" (198). She even encouraged her daughter Pixie to emigrate to England, and when Pixie married an Englishman, she was overjoyed. She was proud of being an anglophile and not an ugly dark Indian.

They were, perhaps, less aware of how fragile their own social standing was, at least until a surge of unrest disturbed the region. The sisters are complex and deeply wounded, trying to come to terms with a world that is moving at a pace that is too fast for them to maintain their roots or identity. These characters included two elderly Anglophile Indian sisters who sipped tea and read Jane Austen, safe within the

confines of the estate they called Mon Ami, and a Swiss priest named Father Booty who maintained a dairy and dreams of teaching Indians to make cheese.

The above characters provide a commentary on postcolonial India with its fading anglophiles, their crumbling edifices and their dwindling power in the face of a modernizing nation's disaffected population. They were shocked by the violence, and also often surprised by the mundaneness of it all.

They discovered the extent of perversity that the heart was capable of as they sat at home with nothing to do, and found that it was possible, faced with unimaginable evil, for a human being to grow bored. At times, the novel almost implies that it would be best if everyone simply knew their place, since trying to move beyond one's origins is to court alienation and ruin. The novel is about the frustration and incomprehension that is fostered by inherited social divisions and the crisis of identity.

IV. Conclusion

The Inheritance of Loss spans two continents and three generations. The story cuts between New York and India, contrasting the menial jobs and meager conditions of immigrant life in the city with the political unrest engulfing an isolated Himalayan hill town.

At every stage wherever they are, Gyan, Biju and Jemubhai are forced to negotiate with a stratified society. All of them aspire to create an identity that comes with destructive consequences, leading all of them to frustration. As Desai explores the aspirations of Sai and Biju, the hopes and expectations of their families, and their disconnections with their roots and identity, she also creates vivid pictures of the friends and relatives who surround them, evoking vibrant images of a broad cross-section of society and revealing the social and political history of India. No one in the novel easily comes by the sense of belonging that all seem to crave, an identity of their own. Longing is perhaps the thing that the characters in *The Inheritance of Loss* do best. They long for home, they long for love and they long for acceptance.

Gyan is frustrated with himself because, “He spent the nights awake, worrying he couldn’t live up to his proclamations” (260). Gyan’s family had relied on him to provide them direction. But he himself seemed directionless and so Gyan gravitates towards the GNLFF movement, seeking a direction. Gyan was also fed up with the fact that Indian-Nepalese were being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. As a consequence, he rejects Sai’s privileged life. Intent to scream victory over oppression, Gyan raises his fist to authority, eventually connecting with a crowd of angry ethnic Nepalese insurrectionists, fighting for their homeland and identity.

Thinking that economic globalization would be the trajectory to prosperity for the downtrodden like him, Biju gladly jet sets to “*Amreeka*”. He thought that after earning a lot of dollars, he would be able to prove himself a civilized man. Unlike his father who had faded into insignificance, Biju had hoped to create an identity for himself. After returning from England, the Cambridge educated Judge is a completely different person. He is not able to connect with his roots anymore. His dislike for Indians leads Jemubhai to a lifetime of loneliness and self-hatred. He abuses his wife, abandons his daughter and hardly cares for Sai. He becomes an estranged Indian whose genuine love is only for his dog, Mutt.

Thus we see that Jemubhai, Biju and Gyan struggle with their identity. The struggle for identity that connects them in postcolonial India leaves them entangled in alienation, loss and ruin. Dealing with all levels of society and many different cultures and identity, Desai shows life’s humor and brutality, its whimsy and harshness, and its delicate emotions and passionate commitments in a novel that is both beautiful and wise. Shifting sands of political conflicts leave everyone struggling for footing, amplifying mistrust and prejudice.

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