

**Orientalising the Postcolonial Nation-State:
A Study of *The Inheritance of Loss* and
*Half a Life***

A Dissertation Submitted to the Central University of Punjab

For the Award of

Master of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

by

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August, 2012

CERTIFICATE

I declare that the dissertation entitled “Orientalising the Postcolonial Nation-State: A Study of The Inheritance of Loss and Half a Life,” has been prepared by me under the guidance of Prof. Paramjit Singh Ramana, and Dr. Zameerpal Kaur, Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature, School of Languages, Literature and Culture, Central University of Punjab. No part of this dissertation has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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Acknowledgement

It is a pleasure to thank God, for making me able to achieve what I am today. I want to express my thanks to God, my parents and my family members.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the stalwart of my department my supervisor and Professor. P. S. Ramana, Dean, School of Languages, Literature and Culture and my dissertation Coordinator Dr. Zameerpal Kaur, Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature for their ingenuous guidance. I want to express my thanks to Dr. Amandeep Singh, Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature for his continuous and extremely useful assistance. I am sincerely and heartily thankful to Dr. Neetu Purohit, Research Associate and Dr. Alpna Saini, Assistant Professor, Centre for Comparative Literature.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the incessant support of my friends Kamaljeet Kaur, Tania Bansal, Barjinder Singh, Amandeep Kaur, Shyamkiran Kaur, and Manpreet Kaur. Last but not the least, I'm truly indebted to my Lab Assistants and Librarians and everybody else who have helped me to complete this work and have made it possible for me to complete my dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

“Orientalising the Postcolonial Nation-State: A Study of *The Inheritance of Loss* and *Half a Life*”

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Key words : Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*, V. S. Naipaul, *Half a Life*, Postcolonialism, Nation-State, Other.

In the postcolonial analysis, the term nation-state has been critiqued mainly because the postcolonial nation states experience multiple exclusions and unequal power distribution. This feeling of marginalisation and exclusion is voiced by many postcolonial writers who are concerned with the psychological effects of the political and economic-cultural structures of the postcolonial world. Both the novels selected for this study, disclose the effects of up-rootedness and displacement and ultimately the quest for a particular nation-state. Kiran Desai in her *The Inheritance of Loss* deals with the themes of cultural conflicts, migration, nostalgia, globalization, multiculturalism, political struggles and economic inequality. Likewise, V. S. Naipaul in his novel *Half a Life* traces the themes of alienation, migration, displacement, rootlessness, mockery and self-deception of the emigrants. Biju in *The Inheritance of Loss* and Willie Chandran in *Half a Life* expose the gamut of issues including the multiple exclusion and distribution faced by postcolonial nation-states, threats of migration, loss of identity, globalization, and economic disparity. The attempt was to analyse both the texts selected for the study to bring forth the underlining beliefs and ideologies. The focus was also on understanding the effects political movements and situations have on personal relations. Study of both the texts foregrounds the miserable conditions of the lives of subaltern people and their continuous struggle and hope of assimilation in the postcolonial nation-states.

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CHAPTER 1

Discourses of Nation-State: Towards Constructing Floating Subjects

One of the basic instincts of human beings is to have freedom from all bondages: freedom of expression, of thought, of emotions, of feelings, of mind and the way one wants to live. While recording the history of human race, one cannot deny the slavery imposed upon the inhabitants of almost all the nations of the world at different times. As a well known psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary and writer Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* says

Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred million men, and one thousand and five hundred million natives. The former had the word; and the others had the use of it. Between the two there were hired kinglets, overloads, and burgoise, shame from beginning to end, which served as go-between. (7)

The natives of a country become helpless when they are controlled by the foreigners as a colony. In 1985, Spivak had asked *Can the subaltern speak?* This question of Gayatri Spivak can be a very uncomfortable question for some. It can make all 'colonizers' restless. Because as Leela Gandhi in her *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* comments, the term subaltern refers to large oppressed sections of society: "By 'subaltern' Spivak meant the oppressed subject, the members of Antonio Gramsci's 'subaltern classes', or more generally those 'of inferior rank'..." (1). The question about the ability or the space for articulation clearly represents the confusing and unpleasant pronouncement of subaltern voices. These subaltern voices are facing the domination of the privileged even at their own land. Colonialism cannot be confined only to the expansion of the various European powers. Ania Loomba, in her *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* observes

Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods. But colonialism in this sense is not merely the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards; it has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history. (2)

Colonialism has been defined by Ania Loomba as the invasion and power over other people's property and possessions. The colonized people not only sacrifice their property and possessions but they are forced to sacrifice the independence of their mind directly or indirectly. The major aspect of colonialism is to have power over the emotions of the colonized people that pose a direct threat to the identity of the subjugated classes. In their own mother land, they are forced to live as aliens. The colonized people are seen as others by the colonizing and hegemonic authorities who despite being outsiders in the colonized land takeover all the authority. So the natives become aliens in their own land in the discourses generated by the colonizing powers. The native is seen as the other in the hegemonic discourses. The moment, the concept of 'othering' emerges it endows new dimensions to the concept of the self and the other.

Roberts in his book *What is Self? A Study of the Spiritual Journey in Terms of Consciousness* has defined self as "what it means to be human" (3). But no one "knows the true nature of self as long as he is living it, or is it. The true nature of self can be disclosed only when it falls away and becomes known in retrospect, by its absence or what was" (Roberts 3). The value of self thus can be realized when it falls away, the concept of other comes to the fore and the concept of other takes altogether new proportions when postcolonialism comes in to question.

The term 'othering' has been ascribed for its coinage to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their book *Key Concepts in Post- Colonial Studies* delineate "for the process by which imperial discourse creates its 'others' ...Othering describes the various ways in which colonial discourse produces its subjects" (171). This term is used to mean different concepts by different critics. Colonial discourses always try to follow the privileged and dominated west. In this process of mimicry, the concept of 'othering' emerges for description of the feelings of the minorities. Bill Ashcroft et. al. in their *Key Concepts in Post- Colonial Studies* observe "In Spivak's explanation, othering is a dialectical process because the colonizing Other is established at the same time as its colonized others are produced as subjects" (171). The colonizers feel the need for the colonized subjects to rule upon them. The colonizers always feel themselves privileged and on the higher rank they deal with the colonized people as marginalized others. The term gets its origin in the existential philosophy. Bill Ashcroft et al. further explore history and theoretical background of the term:

Although the term is used extensively in existential philosophy, notably by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* to define the relations between Self and Other in creating self-awareness and ideas of identity, the definition of the term as used in current post-colonial theory is rooted in the Freudian and post-Freudian analysis of the formation of subjectivity, most notably in the work of the psychoanalyst and cultural theorist Jacques Lacan. (Key Concepts 169- 170)

The 'other' is that which is excluded from the self. In the postcolonial studies the 'other' entails more importance in terms of describing the oppressed, marginalized and colonized subjects. This othering and marginalization is sometimes based on caste, class, religion, education or gender basis. Spivak in her *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* highlights the role of colonial violence and exploitation in the process of othering. She asserts: "epistemic violence was the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as other" (266). The discrimination and marginalization on any basis make the lives of the victims miserable. Both the novels, *Half a Life* by V. S. Naipaul and *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai elucidate the history, process and cultural and emotional implications of this discrimination and marginalization.

With an exile's ironic and satirical sensibility, V. S. Naipaul views the postcolonial nation-states as an uninvolved outsider. He perceptively critiques the contradictions and failures of postcolonial nation-states from a pro-West ideological stance. His characters are often alienated, lonely, persecuted beings, migrants in an alien land who long for personal space and political freedom in a culturally oppressive environment. This is true about Naipaul's attitude towards India also.

His characters are in a constant state of alienation from their roots, from their inheritance, from their birth place, and alienated ultimately from themselves. Naipaul's characters represent the global society of Homi Bhaba: "Gatherings of exiles and emigres and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafes of city centers; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues" (*Nation and Narration* 291). In the same way, the distinctive feature of Kiran Desai's main characters is striving

for their particular identity. They too are equally alien and at a loose end, as ambivalent as any other member of a diasporic community.

The novels *Half a Life* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, selected for this study, speak for innumerable mute migrants and marginalized people who are always seen as inferiors by the dominating class. *Half a Life* is situated in India, London, and an unnamed African country. And *The Inheritance of Loss* is situated in India especially in Kalimpong and in New York. The connecting link between both the novels is the exposure of the problems of racism, bigotry, color, caste and religious discrimination in the postcolonial nation-states.

The protagonist of *Half a Life*, Willie Somerset Chandran faces the problem of identity crisis throughout his life. He migrates from one place to other from India to London and then to Africa to find a particular and individual identity of his own. But his hope of assimilation remains a mirage for him and he feels as other at every place. Said's concept of the conflict of Western 'superiority' and Eastern 'inferiority' troubles him throughout his life. The label othering reflects the cultural hierarchy that Said has described while giving his notions about the orient and occident power relations in his *Orientalism*, "... the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority" (42). Orientals are always represented as lower and occident's as higher as Said has described.

'Other' is represented from the perspective of the dominant. This vivid binary of the colonizer and the colonized, the self and the other remains an integral part of the lives of the people of both the categories. Although the first is the oppressor and the second is the oppressed. "The 'others' are considered as uncivilized, savage, and mindless people; they are physically, emotionally, and psychologically maltreated by the whites, who consider themselves to be superior, civilized and intelligent" (Mushtaq 26). This discrimination by hegemonic powers challenges the physical, mental and psychological freedom of the oppressed classes. The process of 'othering' is imposed upon the colonized by their rulers: "...a process, by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes. It locates its 'others' by this process in the pursuit of that power within which its own subjectivity is established" (Ashcroft et al. *Key Concepts* 169-170).

The imperial definition of self is limited, but one thing is always certain that 'other' is placed outside the boundaries of the self and is considered inferior to the self. When this process of placing the 'other' outside the boundaries of the self is prolonged for a long time, the outburst of the oppressed classes gets violent at times. In *The Inheritance of Loss* the native Gorkhas' struggle is a form of the outburst of the suppressed people against the native as well as alien colonizers. These political upheavals affect personal relations a lot, as Gyan and Sai's relation is broken due to Gyan's joining of GNLFF. Gyan thinks Sai can never understand the miseries of their class as she herself belongs to the privileged class. Desai projects the political turmoil affecting personal relations at individual as well as racial and class levels.

George Orwell in "The Prevention of Literature" asserts "there is no such thing as genuinely non-political literature" (373). Political activities are an integral part of literary expressions. John McLeod in his *Beginning Postcolonialism* claims "...the twentieth century has been the century of colonial demise, and of decolonization for millions of people who were once subject to the authority of the British crown" (6). This colonial demise also changes the themes of writings. The issues of colonialism and postcolonialism have been used by and large by the twentieth century literary writers. The issue of postcolonialism is a contentious one, so is its definition.

Postcolonialism is a controversial term. To define it in universally acceptable terms is simply impossible because confusion, skepticism and doubts always surround this relatively new field of literary studies. It studies literary discourses in terms of their colonial history, language and culture and focuses on the way in which the erstwhile colonies negotiates their problematised identities and tries to come to terms with their culture, history and politics.

Postcolonialism refers to a historical phase undergone by Third World countries after the decline of colonialism: for example, when countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean separated from the European empires and were left to rebuild themselves. (Guerin et al. 303)

The most crucial challenge faced by postcolonialism is the process of rebuilding. This process of rebuilding is also controlled by the occidentals, and poses a direct threat to the identity of these orientals. "The prefix 'Post', as Lyotard

has written elaborates the conviction ‘that it is both possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking’” (qtd. in Gandhi 7). But this prefix has been interpreted differently by different people. “Since the “post” in the “post-colonial” suggests “after” the demise of colonialism, it is imbued, quite apart from its users’ intentions, with an ambiguous spatio-temporality” (Shohat 102) as different countries get freedom at different times. Spatial and temporal frames question this prefix before Colonialism and create controversies regarding its use. But still one cannot determine whether the phrase should be used with a hyphen or without it.

But one thing is certain that these postcolonial narratives talk about the convolution of placement and displacement. When one person moves from one place to another his identity comes into question. Bill Ashcroft et al. in their *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature* state

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. (8)

Dislocation foregrounds the idea of the self. When one person migrates from one place to another due to any reason, either voluntarily or as indentured labour, the experience of enslavement or alienation emerges and the identity of a person comes in to question. The identities of migrated people change as Stuart Hall says in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (111)

Hall claims that identity is fluid which is never complete and this identity of a person becomes more problematic when one migrates from one place to another. Migration of person endows him with a new outlook towards his own country and the country to which one emigrates. Many times when these migrants return to their homelands their dreams and visions of homeland get shattered and they feel

an acute sense of disappointment and even antagonism towards their mother land. For example, when Trinidad born Naipaul, with his Indian inheritance, comes to India for his first visit, he is completely disappointed by his visit. An Area of Darkness is the outcome of that frustration. "The rigid hierarchy of caste system in India, which he condemns, therefore, disturbs Naipaul" (Chaubey 4). He articulates his wish for equal rights to the populace of the world.

Sometimes it is believed that the postcolonial literatures aim at asserting the equal rights and freedom of all the people on the globe. With the colonial expansion of Europe in the 19th century, "nine-tenths of the entire land surface of the globe" (Young 2) was subjugated by the colonizing powers. The colonized people not only suffered physically and economically but also culturally from the binary opposition of west and non-west, which claims the superiority of the first and the inferiority of the latter. Much of the postcolonial fiction questions this inequality faced by the Eastern people that persists even after independence of different nations. Robert. J. C. Young, in his *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* observes:

Postcolonialism claims the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being. The reality, though, is that the world today is a world of inequality, and much of the difference falls across the broad division between people of the west and those of the non-west. This division between the rest and the west was made fairly absolute in the 19th century. (2)

This division of the west and the rest makes people uncomfortable when it lingers on even after the end of colonialism. "The term "post-colonial", in this sense, masks the white settlers' colonialist-racist policies toward indigenous peoples not only before independence but also after the official break from the imperial center" (Shohat 102-103). White settlers undoubtedly rule the indigenous people at their homelands. But this process of racist policies rules the native people even after their independence makes the indigenous people uncomfortable. The outburst of this sort of frustrations often gets reflected in literature. Huge number of colonies gained Independence in the twentieth century. The literature produced by inhabitants of these colonies is entitled as postcolonial literature. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature* observe: "So the literatures of

African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all postcolonial literatures” (2).With their inheritance of colonial rule, the writers of these colonies are referred to as postcolonial writers. The literature produced by them is called postcolonial literature. Postcolonialism is an umbrella term and different critics have defined it in their own ways.

John Mcleod in his *Beginning Postcolonialism* says that very essentially, postcolonial writings involve one or more of the following, firstly “[r]eading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism, primarily those texts concerned with the workings and legacy of colonialism” in either the past or the present. Secondly, “[r]eading texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant families,” which deal in the main with diaspora experience and its many consequences on the lives of bearers. Or thirdly it can involve readings in “the light of theories of colonial discourses, re-reading texts produced during colonialism; both those that directly address the experience of Empire, and those that seem not to” (33).

In each of these situations the reader’s perspective holds the central place. While writing, one portrays his or her first hand experiences; while reading the empathic reader feels somebody else’s experiences. It is a kind of communion. Both the experiences in the context of postcolonial writings explain their frustration towards colonial rule. The postcolonial discourses sometimes emphasize the reading of those texts which are produced during colonialism. Undoubtedly the experiences of the postcolonial writers encompass their aggression for or against colonialism and their efforts to assimilate and sometimes to reject the new imposed conventions. Jean Paul Sartre, famous French existential philosopher and writer, in the Preface of Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, writes

A new generation came on the scene, which changed the issue. With unbelievable patience, its writers and poets tried to explain to us that our values and the true facts of their lives did not hang together, and that they could neither reject them completely nor yet assimilate them. (8)

With the advent of a new generation of writers on the literary scene, major challenge before them was to put forward their values and sometimes they tried to assimilate in the new environment. The writers sometimes expressed their fear

and hatred for the colonial rule and at other times nostalgia and desire for 'home'. Migration sometimes heralds displacement and alienation which is the integral part of the portrayal of migrant lives.

The alienation of vision and the crisis in self-image which this displacement produces is as frequently found in the accounts of Canadian 'free settlers' as of Australian convicts, Fijian-Indian or Trinidadian- Indian indentured laborers, West Indian slaves, or forcibly colonized Nigerians or Bengalis... (Ashcroft, *The Empire Writes Back* 9).

The accounts of many postcolonial writers portray their alienation and identity crises. The Western audience too usually expects the exposure of the gloom and desolation of the Eastern people rather than the exhilarating pictures of them. Tapan K. Ghosh in his book *The Fiction of Kiran Desai* says

The story of the 'other', self-reliant and self-respecting India is not received cordially in the West, because the sale value of the story is minimal. To write in English is to write for the non-Indians, to write for their satisfaction, to sustain and re-in force their beliefs is to translate India and Indianness, according to their predilections. (17)

The novels produced by the Western writers target the Western audience and they rarely do justice to the regional aspirations and cultures. These novels sometimes present the unsympathetic attitude towards the Eastern people depicting no intellect, no aesthetic ability, and no refined way of the life of Eastern people. Most of the postcolonial writers put forward the outsider's perspective towards the East. "Naipaul might be portrayed as a great writer who wrote about greater things-caste, community, race, and the third world. But his disgust for the deprived is clear...He is casteist, a communalist and a racist" (Shukla 148). Naipaul more often than not exposes the ugliness, callousness, insensitivity, and poverty of the Eastern people, in a way downgrading east in the eyes of the west.

He is completely shocked by the extreme poverty and the shortcomings of the social organizations which hinder the progress of Indian people. With this frustration, sometimes Naipaul's characters are left in limbo and sometimes they prefer to wear a mask to hide their hybrid identity. At times Desai also becomes indifferent and unsympathetic towards the description of Gorkha's life. If some indigenous writer had written about Kalimpong and the struggles faced by the

native people, he might have done a better justice to the native people. "In Kiran's India, people are afflicted by incurable poverty and privation. Their minds are filled with anguish that result from non-fulfillment of their basic needs and that lead them to resort to terrorist violence" (Ghosh 16). In Kiran Desai's world, the poverty and ugliness of Indians is exposed and the Westerners are portrayed in the positive manner. Rudyard Kipling's well known ballad "Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet" (245) also proclaims the same cultural, moral and racial superiority of the West over the East. "The East was a concern for the West on virtually every level: material, political, aesthetic and spiritual" (Varisco 31) But it was seen often from a negative and derogatory perspective.

While explaining the east-west relations, Said asserts Foucault's notion that 'knowledge' is not 'innocent' rather it has an intimate relation with powers of the time. In the postcolonial context, knowledge is what Westerners possess. Said has sharply criticized Oriental's stereotypical image presented by the West and the Western tags as ascribed to the eastern people. "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal." (Said 40) This knowledge provided by the West constructs the East and Eastern culture in hegemonic discourses.

"Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" (Said 2). Further this distinction between orient and occident controls the thought process of the people. Naipaul in his *Half a Life* has described how the Westerners are always considered as superiors. Carla says in *Half a Life*: "The French know how to live" (Naipaul 172-173). This statement clearly shows the cultural prejudice that only the French people know the ways of life and their way of life is the only way of living.

Said has spoken very candidly about the process of the formation of different types of knowledge about the 'orient' that is clearly constructed by the West. The Eastern people try to fit themselves in the Western frames. Homi Bhaba's concept of mimicry illustrates this process of copying the dominated ideologies. "In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy" (Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* 90). The efforts of black people to be white with the help of powder and creams show their efforts to copy the privileged. "For the first time I saw that she used powder. There was a

thin white bloom on her cheeks and forehead; it made the black skin matt, and you could see where the powder ended and the shiny skin showed again” (Naipaul 13). Willie’s mother used to do this for hiding her black identity that was considered as inferior by the privileged people around her.

Many of the Eastern people succumb to such alternatives to hide their native identity. With these efforts people think they can fit themselves in the privileged western frames and when this process of adapting themselves as mimics is challenged by a large number of native people, a new conflict arises within the postcolonial societies, pitting the nationalist natives against the mimics. The rising nationalist consciousness often gives birth to the nation-states and provides new dimensions to the definitions of the term ‘nation’; a concept which according to Anderson is an ‘imagined’ entity: “it is an imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (7).

Benedict Anderson in his very influential book *Imagined Communities* takes note of the factors that led to the emergence of the idea of nation and sees nation as an ‘imagined’ rather than ‘natural’ community “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (7). Even the people of a community do not personally appreciate each other but unconsciously there is a bonding among the people belonging to a particular community. Saeed Saeed in *The Inheritance of Loss* gives voice to such imagined communities when he asserts: “First I am Muslim, then I am Zanzibari, then I will be American” (Desai 136). His introduction of himself as first a Muslim clearly states that even after his migration he imagines himself aligned to his own religious community. The image in the minds of people belonging to a particular community gives them a sense of unity even in diversity. Although people belong to different religions, castes, ethnicities, depending on the context and opposition, realize a sense of unity even in spite of diversity among them.

One gains national identity by the State or country in which s/he lives. Sometimes “Social organizations and social identities may be larger than the boundaries of states and may have power over them” (Hall. J 2). The state or its institutions may not be able to control all the social groups in its territory with equal authority. State can be seen as a self-governing political entity that is defined by particular geographical boundaries, shared history and a common culture.

Nevertheless, the idea of the 'post-colonial' nation-state has become problematic and controversial. Still it is a significant way of defining political identity in contemporary world. Bill Ashcroft in his article "Beyond the Nation: Post-Colonial Hope" observes

The nation-state has been critiqued in post-colonial analysis largely because the post-independence, post colonized nation, that wonderful utopian idea, proved to be a focus of exclusion and division rather than unity; perpetuating the class divisions of the colonial state rather than liberating national subjects. (2)

In the postcolonial analysis, the term nation-state has been critiqued mainly because the postcolonial nation states experience multiple exclusions and unequal power distribution. This feeling of marginalisation and exclusion is voiced by many postcolonial writers who are concerned with the psychological effects of the political and economic-cultural structures of the postcolonial world. Arthur Brodbeck observes:

We are accustomed to explaining history in terms of crises of a physical nature, as well in terms of waves of economic problems and physical disease, but we have not yet learned to interpret history in terms of psychological maladies that arise and fall over the course of time. (qtd. in Bande)

Although Brodbeck observes that one has not learned to interpret history in terms of psychological maladies, yet the literary writers often try to portray the psychological effects of different political turmoils. Many Indian writers in English, like, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Manju Kapoor, Bharti Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy have penned down the harsh political, economic and psychological effects of postcolonialism. Ashok D. Mashale, in his article "The Postcolonial Perspectives in Indian English Novels" traces the history of Indian fiction in English.

The postcolonial Indian English fiction witnesses at least three generations of Indian novelists in English. The first generation consists mainly the prominent figures like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, the second like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal and others enriched the fiction. But the third generation of

writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, etc. established the fame in international arena. (32)

The postcolonial Indian writings in English have delineated Indian history and culture in different shades and from different perspectives. Many postcolonial writers have portrayed native reality and Indian sensibility from the native perspective while others have done so as outsiders. The east-west encounter becomes prominent with diverse themes in the early Indian English fiction. The writings of the golden trio R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao deal with different aspects and problems of Indian society. For example, R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for Mahatma* describes Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India movement, freedom struggle and its effects on the native minds through a romantic story and the Gandhian struggle only serves as the background to the novel.

Mulk Raj Anand's cry against the miserable plight of the untouchables in *Untouchable* in 1935, on the other hand, is a forceful denunciation of the evils of casteism and decadent orthodoxy and "age-old injustice perpetrated by traditional Hindu society upon a whole class of people within its fold" (Purohit 62). Anand is deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's sympathy for the poor and untouchable Indians. Anand's pessimistic end of the novel gives a resonant call to innumerable Indians to reject age old injustice committed upon them. Then Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) is also vibrant Gandhian novel that clearly express the fervor of nationalist movements, and voices the veiled wish of Indians to be free. Partition of India and violence marking the independence also are dealt in detail by many writers. "Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* (1958), Malgonkar's *The Distant Dream*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1975) and Attiah Hussain's *Sunlight on a Broken Window* (1961), etc. offer a sense of nostalgia sustaining the event of partition of India" (Mashale 33).

Postcolonial Indian English fiction often critiques the Indian society and its institutions. English is only the medium, the problems and issues often remain typically Indian. These writings undoubtedly explore the anguish of the people. Aijaz Ahmad in his thought provoking book *In Theory* expresses these concerns that the postcolonial writers are concerned with how one can "free oneself from stable identities of class, nation and gender" (271). A large number of postcolonial writings trace the aspirations which Aijaz Ahmad has highlighted.

Salman Rushdie in his *Midnight's Children* deconstructs the effects of colonialism on the Indian minds. "The novel takes up one of the English novel's central concerns of inheritance and suggests that colonialism forever disrupted India's narrative, personal, political, and cultural beginnings" (Walkowitz 232). Another significant novel, *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh points out the effect of Colonialism and freedom struggles in India. V.S. Naipaul has also delineated the effects of postcolonialism and orientalist thought on the citizens of the third world. His protagonist Willie Chandran in *Half a Life* faces the effects of migration in this postcolonial world. "To be Portuguese living in Africa, to be a Caribbean man in London, to be an Indian woman married to a German man, to be a Brahmin married to a "backward" – all of these mixed-up conditions, Naipaul suggests, lead to 'half a life'" (Walkowitz 231).

Likewise, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* traces the effects of up-rootedness and displacement and ultimately the quest for a particular nation-state in the postcolonial world. A well-known Bengali American author, Jhumpa Lahiri has also penned down the themes of cultural clash in the postcolonial world but the depiction of Kiran Desai and Lahiri differs. Concilio while comparing *Namesake* and *The Inheritance of Loss* writes

In contrast, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is not about families, for all the families, have been disrupted by deaths or migration, it is a novel about community made of single individuals; it is more a choral novel than a story about central hero or heroine.
(90)

Jemubhai Patel's change of his name as James when he went to England echoes Lahiri's Nikhil Gogol Ganguli's efforts to change his name and is in a way like Willie Somerset Chandran's hybrid name. Kiran Desai has chosen the particular region of Kalimpong for describing the effects of colonialism on the minds of colonized people. She shares similarity with R. K. Narayan for choosing a particular region. "As Narayan has done in his well known Malgudi stories, Desai has conjured up a small Indian town poised midway between tradition and modernity" (Sinha 132).

While taking up the contrast between her home town, Kalimpong and New York for describing the miserable plight of the people who try to copy the west, Desai has attained remarkable place among the postcolonial Indian English

writers, which gets echoed in the words of Sunita Sinha, who writes “Both Rushdie and Rohinton Mistry believe that, with this her second novel, Desai has secured her place with the great contemporary Indian authors exploring India and society in India and elsewhere” (138).

Exploration of confusion, chaos and uncertainty in both the novels by Desai and V. S. Naipaul makes Ghosh write in *The Fiction of Kiran Desai*, “this treatment of postcolonial chaos and despair that brings Kiran Desai closer to V. S. Naipaul whose shadow looms large in this novel” (33). The dilemmas of the postcolonial nation-states and the concept of a human being's quest for identity, the miserable conditions of colonized people even after their independence are delved deep into by V. S. Naipaul and Kiran Desai, the recognizable voices of postcolonial literature.

A number of research articles and books have been published on the complexities of the process of rebuilding of postcolonial nation-states, with regards to the works by Naipaul and Desai. Both these works are recent publications and many aspects of these works still need to be explored. Some critics have highlighted the diasporic aspects and vision of Naipaul's fiction. Alan Davis in his article “Road Trips” observes that Willie's journey is without any purpose and he is forced to live a half and borrowed life.

Similarly, Gillian Dooley in his article “Alien and Adrift: The Diasporic Sensibility in V.S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* and J.M. Coetzee's *Youth*” compares both the novels and describes the young men newly arrived in London in 1960's, who strive to make their own way in the world. He has even traced the problems of the upbringing of both the protagonists.

On the question of identity, Bhasker Shukla in his book *Indian English Literature after Independence* points out that the migrants are in a state of perpetual loss. S. S. Sharma too, in his article “Identity and Sensuality in V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life*” traces Naipaul's portrayal of Indians who become mimics of western culture, in a constant need of their identity to get acknowledged. Likewise, Balkar Singh in his article “Naipaul's Mystic Masseur: A Quest for Identity Amidst Deracination” said that the novel *Half a Life* is apparently a record of Willie's search for particular identity. Further he writes that Naipaul's all the major protagonists suffer the tragedy of displacement and separation from their land and the forlorn spirits' search for land is associated with their search for identity.

On the strategies used by Kiran Desai, Mallikarjun Patil in *Recritiquing Women's Writings in English* states that Desai's novel explicitly presents multicultural aspects and the dark side of natives' lives. She presents a world of altered human relationships, of epistemological skepticism, of high technology and strange and disoriented sense of human purpose. Patil defines *The Inheritance of Loss* as a post-modernist novel.

Another critic, Reena Sanasam in her article "Human identities and Transculturalism in Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*" traces that the novel is replete with the problems of human being's search for identity and aggravations associated with the postcolonial impacts and its aftermath. Further Sanasam observes that both the important characters of the novel, Gyan and Sai transcend the narrow confines of their community to give birth to a new culture that will allow them to exist as new beings in a new world order.

Further tracing the themes of the novel, Bhattacharya in his article in a book edited by Tapan K. Ghosh's *The Fiction of Kiran Desai* opines that although *The Inheritance of Loss* is situated in Independent India, the colonized past forms a lasting legacy of knowledge and mistrust, enlightenment and darkness, cultural dependence and nationalistic confidence and these are born out of division between Bharat and England. Migration brings nothing in its wake but a loss of identity, culture and hybrid modernity with discredited colonialism. In his article "Ah, England", Tom Wilhelmus criticises Desai's fictionalizing the Nepal insurgency and for portraying the dark side of Gorkhas' life.

Carolyn Alessio in his *British Writers Supplement XV* gives his ideas on Kiran Desai's novel that it foregrounds the struggle of characters for personal and political identity, that in spite of the feelings of alienation they try to be united. Narendra Khandait in his article "Reclamation of Inheritance: Biju's Homecoming in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*" discusses the impact of Globalization on Indian English literature. The themes of globalization such as outsourcing, migration, multiculturalism or cultural encounters, racism, alienation, etc. are explored in the novel.

The theme of treatment of nation-state in both these narratives has not been studied in detail. A study of both the novels, thus, will be useful to understand the effects of nationalistic politics and identities on diasporic

individuals and communities. This would also bring into focus the marginalization and dehumanization of different individual in different parts of the world.

In the wake of globalization, the process of migration heralds a lot of threats. Dislocation of an individual sometimes brings permanent alienation. The present work is an attempt at focusing on the idea of nation state that affects all the aspects of social and cultural life which lead to the migration of individuals, community and race and ultimately their construction as citizens of the margins.

Various themes, politics, events and techniques used by V. S. Naipaul in *Half a Life* and by Kiran Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss* will be discussed in detail. The second chapter will draw attention to comprehensive analysis of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, describing how political cataclysm affects personal relations. The third chapter will focus on the detailed study of V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life*. It will deal with the perpetual and never ending sufferings of emigrants. The fourth chapter of the dissertation will compare and contrast the similarities and differences in the portrayal of the issues and problems for individuals created by different nation-states.

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CHAPTER 2

Critiquing Regional Aspirations: *The Inheritance of Loss*

“...there is nothing outside language, outside textuality, outside representation- everything becomes, in a sense, ‘Literature’” (Ahmad 56).

Literature has the potential, power and ability to witness, understand, construct and protect the feelings of human beings of the universe. People around the world share one common feeling that they are human beings in spite of their nationalities. Same is the quality of literature that it plays a vital role in providing more opportunities for self-realization by making universals particular and particular universal. The greater tradition could be envisaged, imagined and witnessed through an effective and well imagined literary presentation. And sometimes “It is being adopted as a strategy for social change and social movements by people in power, since literature possesses a greater value in the political dynamics of any state” (Reddy 94). Kiran Desai in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* projects how political movements effect personal relations. Aude Ferrand in his article “The Singularity of New Indian Fiction” observes

Kiran Desai’s writing takes the reader through a series of seemingly independent snap-shorts separated by a line drawn in the middle of the page, into the lives and most intimate thoughts of the characters, thus sweeping through space and time. (286)

Kiran Desai is one of the most significant Indian women novelists in English. She has made a bold attempt to raise voice against the atrocities and injustice done to the migrated people at distant lands. Being a diasporic writer, Kiran Desai has written about the displaced, mute, and alienated migrants but at the same time, she has also written about the aspirations of regional people. Born in 1971 in New Delhi, winner of Man Booker Prize in 2006, Kiran Desai is one of the pioneering and young Indian writers writing in English. She is the third Indian English novelist to win the Booker prize after Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy, and she is the youngest woman winner. The themes of cultural conflicts, migration, nostalgia, globalization, multiculturalism, political struggles and economic inequality are the hallmarks of Desai’s pen.

Kiran Desai has written two novels *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). Carolyn Alessio while writing about “Kiran Desai” remarks “Both novels, however, address the gap between traditionally raised parents and their contemporary, more formally educated offspring” (83). Although both the novels share a common theme depicting the gap between traditionally raised parents and their contemporary children yet there is a marked difference between both the novels. *The Inheritance of Loss*, on the one hand, describes the pathos of migration, alienation and identity crisis at the foreign land and the sufferings and miseries the Gorkhas on the other. But *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* as Dr. Nandita Singh Says in her research paper “The Search for Identity in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*”:

Hullabaloo tells the story of Sampath Chawla, born in a middle class family, who has no achievement to his credit for which he is constantly reprimand by his father and derided by the society. His feelings of claustrophobia and sense of alienation with his milieu lead to the renunciation of present existence for the life of ascetic in the tree. (20)

Sampath Chawla’s life of an ascetic in the tree is due to his marginalization in the society. Moreover, his determination to seek freedom far from the madding crowd shows his keen longing for spatial sequestration. These efforts of Sampath bring him closer to his mother, Kulfi, who also want to assert herself in society. Ramya Rajagopalan in “The Art of Invisibility in Kiran Desai’s *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*” states “

Kulfi and Sampath are social outcasts; ...steeped as it is in the ancient beliefs and superstitions of the subcontinent while caught in the encroachment of post-colonial modes of thought, and necessarily suffused with the thirst for gossip of any self-respecting community. (1)

Both Kulfi and Sampath want to assert their identity in the society but there is a marked difference between both the assertions. Kulfi’s alienation from society is due to her limitations that her blooming pregnancy is borne alone in rooms cut off from the noise of her husband and her mother-in law but Sampath has done it by starting his life in the guava tree. Sampath’s residence in the Guava tree and

natural descriptions by Desai put forward her love for nature as nature forms an integral part of her writings.

Like Wordsworth and Frost, nature is an intimate part of Desai's pen, ambushed by nature and often abandoned by family, culture, and language, the protagonists in Desai's novels struggle with the most basic question of assimilation... (Alessio 84)

Plants, flowers, hills, rivers, and beautiful gardens are an integral part of her novels. Sometimes she tries to place human beings entirely in the lap of the nature. Her protagonist of Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard, Sampath Chawla started living in a guava tree in an orchard once that had been owned by the old district judge of the town before the government declared it part of a national forest. In the beginning, his family was against Sampath because he turned the dreams of the family into nothingness.

...his father becomes Sampath's champion and soon turns his son's guru status into a lucrative tourist enterprise, even building his son a platform and bed, while his mother and grandmother arrange for regular meal service. (Alessio 85)

The tree which might be considered as a metaphor tree of knowledge for Sampath offers him refuge and solace. His problems of his alienation from society and from himself are somewhat inherited from his father. As Desai's first protagonist inherits alienation, similarly she has received alienation as her literary inheritance.

Inheritance is something which we owe to our ancestors. Kiran Desai is the daughter of Ashwin Desai and eminent Indian writer in English, Anita Desai, who has written fourteen novels, and has won five different awards. Tapan K. Ghosh in his book *The Fiction of Kiran Desai* illustrates

Anita's works examine the themes of forgiveness and division which stem from observing her own mother who experienced identical situation in wartime Germany, a country she left for good. These are the themes which Kiran has inherited. (9)

She has portrayed in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* the true and ground realities of the lives of migrated people and their struggle for their coming back to roots. The inheritance of Loss is the story of the loss, the loss of emotions, of feelings, of identity, and ultimately the loss of their existence. Loss of inheritance

and inheritance of loss becomes synonymous in the case of migrants. Desai has portrayed as Tapan K. Ghosh in his *The Fiction of Kiran Desai* asserts

It is the inheritance of little losses and failures accumulated from generation to generation that Desai has sought to chronicle through the parallel stories based in imperial England, Postcolonial India and the centre of global politics and economy, the United States. (74)

Set in three different locations, it also brings the conflicts and struggles of caste system in India and even in foreign countries to the limelight. Being a minority, the migrated people have to suffer a lot by being alienated at distant lands. It mirrors that how in the globalised world, the boundaries based on the class, caste; region and religion are disappearing now a days. But these boundaries still exist in the minds of the inhabitants.

This novel sets in 1980s in the USA and Kalimpong, located in the northern part of India near Darjeeling. The novel switches between both the settings Kalimpong and America. During the unstable political period in the mountainous region of Kalimpong, Sai, seventeen year old girl lives with her maternal grandfather. Her parents died in Russia, when she was just four years old. Desai's message is very clear from the beginning of the novel as Ghosh says

...life comprises both hatred and love, justice and injustice, poverty and opulence, selfishness, cruelty and violence as much as sympathy, friendliness and charity, loss as well as gain, and that with all its inherent contradictions it will go on despite individual aberrations and socio-political upheavals. (68)

The novel *The Inheritance of Loss* follows the miserable plight of the individuals whose life stuck in these dilemmas. The collision of different cultures is one of the important issues of the novel. The clues of social and political unrest are given from the beginning. The judge symbolizes innumerable migrants who are trapped in identity crisis. With their vain efforts of being Anglophile, they find the loss of their indigenous identity too.

His cook, Panna Lal has sent his son Biju to America with his hard earned money with the hope that he will send him at place like heaven. Rajni Singh in his article "The deplorable state of illegal immigrants in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*" says "In the dingy and suffocating apartments in Harlem, Biju's life is a mockery of the 'American dream' that he had dreamt of He is not at all far from the

poverty his father believed he has escaped” (96). Both the cook and his son possess the same American dream. As America is the most proffered destination for them like a lot of other Indians without visiting it. Biju’s visit to America is not very close to his American dream. He finds himself in the long queues of jobless people. “Biju approached Tom & Tomoko’s—“No jobs.” McSweeney’s Pub—“Not hiring” (49). His relationship with his father also suffers after his going abroad: “Or they returned and found they’d missed the entire last quarter of a lifetime, their parents like photograph negatives. And there were worse tragedies” (233).

But in spite of all, almost all the characters of Kiran Desai are obsessed with the thoughts of modernity and westernization. One of the neighbors of Sai is Mrs. Sen, her daughter Mun Mun has gone to America. She always praises her and boasts of her being a foreigner. Other neighbors Noni and Lalita live in rose covered cottage called Mon Ami. Both of them do not like the parents of Sai but they like Sai very much for her westernized upbringing. “But despite their opinion of Russia and Sai’s parents, over the years they grew very fond of Sai” (42).

Desai is very much clear about the description of the obsession with westernized ideas in Indian minds. Even the students go from India to America for studies; they want American suitable matches for them. Biju goes to give the ordered pizza to the girls, while coming back; Biju is surprised to hear, one of the girls saying “She wants the Marlboro man with a Ph. D” (50).

The Cook is a true representative of all those people who felt that their utopian land is real but not an imaginary world. Without knowing the realities, Biju’s father claims whatever he thinks about his imaginary dream land. “My son works in New York,” the cook boasted to everyone he met. “He is the manager of a restaurant business.” “New York. Very big city,” he explained. “The cars and buildings are nothing like here. In that country, there is enough food for everybody.” (84)

Like Biju, innumerable migrants feel that their dream destination will have all possessions and without thinking about the consequences they move from one place to the other but then feel displaced at the new place. Sometimes the acceptance of something takes place at the cost of negation of some of our own possessions. The displacement and acceptance of Russian culture by her parents ends in the permanent alienation of Sai. And like Sai, innumerable other migrants also feel the same alienation. As another Indian migrant in the USA, Harish-Harry

feels that his daughter is out of his control and has forgotten Indian culture to which his daughter replies, "I didn't ask to be born," she said. "You had me for your own selfish reasons, wanted a servant, didn't you?" (149) and makes him realize the difference between Indian and American culture.

Kiran Desai has personally felt these differences in both the cultures and at the same time the political upheavals as an integral part of the region she has inherited, Kalimpong. The description of political upheavals with such openness is the significance of Desai's pen. Desai voices the Gorkhas' wish of having their nation-state in the postcolonial world: "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas" (7).

The influence of political upheavals on the personal relations is another concern of the novel. The alienation in the distant lands is somewhat tolerable, but the loss of identity in one's homeland is quite unendurable. Gyan is voicing this kind of feelings "British Raj Murdabad!" If a nation had such a climax in its history, its heart, would it not hunger for it again?" (158). Their desire for having their nation-state gives rise to such movements in the history.

These political movements undeniably affect personal relations. Gyan loves Sai and both of them cannot live without each other. But the rise of Gorkha movements brings their personal relation to an end. Gyan's love for modernity gives birth to his relationship with Sai. As Rukmini Bhaya Nair says "Postcoloniality is a condition requiring a cure, and the passage to that cure involves a return to buried memories of colonial trauma" (qtd. in Shands 5). While struggling for their independence, Gyan and Sai's relationship ends like buried memories of the colonial trauma. Gyan starts hating Sai, as he thinks that she can never understand the torture faced by their community. She can only assert such assertions, "When did shouting and strikes get you anywhere" (260).

Gyan thinks that Sai can never understand his feelings, because she herself has a protected ancestry. He speaks to her with such abhorrence, "It's clear all you want to do is copy. Can't think for yourself. Copycat, copycat. Don't you know, these people you copy like a copycat, THEY DON'T WANT YOU!!!!" (164).

Here Sai is announcing the robust feelings Desai has intentionally preached in the novel, "There was grace in forgetting and giving up, she reminded it; it was childish not to—everyone had to accept imperfection and loss in life" (252). Everyone in the novel has lost something, Sai has lost her parents, love, Gyan too

has lost the same, the Judge has lost his wife, his dog Mutt, whom he loved even more than his granddaughter, his culture, and ultimately his identity, and Biju has lost all his possessions. “Not disheartened by losing both the lifetime savings and an opportunity, the cook, earning extra money through illegal liquor trade, again prepares Biju to give it a try” (Khandait 174). The experience of his coming back proves even more detrimental than his leaving India, all that he possesses after coming back to India is, “Darkness fell and he sat right in the middle of the path—without his baggage, without his savings, worst of all, without his pride. Back from America with far less than he’d ever had” (317).

No doubt, everyone has lost something or someone they loved the most. But all of them inherited loss by simply being born in India. Loss is the only thing that was left behind, when Britishers left India. In this situation of utter hopelessness, one can only think, what Sai thinks,

Life wasn’t single in its purpose . . . or even in its direction. . . . The simplicity of what she’d been taught wouldn’t hold. Never again could she think there was but one narrative and that this narrative belonged only to herself, that she might create her own tiny happiness and live safely within it. (323)

Sai is presented by Desai as an alienated human being. She is brought up in Anglicized way. Nobody like her, but felt fascinated at the idea of her Anglicized upbringing. Her relationship with Gyan is also not liked by anybody around her. Her neighbors Noni and Lola do not like her parents, but they like Sai’s anglicized way of living. “But despite their opinion of Russia and Sai’s parents, over the years they grew very fond of Sai.”(42)

Sai’s grandfather also does not share very congenial relations with her. He takes her responsibility, but only when she is completely helpless and there was nobody else to take care of her. Her parents died in an accident. “In a country so full of relatives, Sai suffered a dearth” (28). The loneliness of her life ends with her relationship with her mathematics tutor, Gyan. Although this relationship ends in nothingness by showing how the political upheavals influence personal relationships. Mallikarjun Patil in his article “Kiran Desai’s The Inheritance of Loss As a Post-Modern Novel” says “Sai and Gyan loved each other without understanding their destiny. So they played the game of courtship, reaching,

retreating, teasing and fleeing” (27). Thus the relationship begins with hopes, ends in displeasures and again alienation in Sai’s life.

Displacement heralds alienation as a compensation. Sai feels alienated from her native land. The main reason behind her alienation is the displacement and migration of her parents. Harish Harry, an Indian migrant at the USA also feels the same alienation and dearth of relations, because of his migration. When he does not like his daughter’s acceptance of American way of life, he scolds her, but everything is useless now: “See, Biju, see what this world is,’ he says and begins to weep with his arm on Biju’s shoulder” (149). Migrants feel dearth of relations as an integral part of their life but they are forced to feel discriminations based on color and caste also.

Color and caste are by birth possession of a person. But the discrimination on these bases does nothing but makes the lives of the victims poorly miserable. The difference between being and becoming is very much clear. Biju migrates to the USA for a prosperous and peaceful future but his dreams are completely shattered after his visit to the USA. His father, the Cook always feels that Biju will come back with his grandchildren without knowing the he is not able to get two times meal there. No doubt migration is unavoidable in the so called modern world. When one person migrates from one place to the other due to any reason whether due to voluntary or indentured labor, the experience of enslavement emerges.

Moreover the color and caste sometimes becomes the pedestal of personal relations. Like Saeed Saeed, Omar, and other migrants Harish-Harry also feels, “And the romances—the Indian-white combination, in particular, was a special problem” (148).

With the rapid advancement of technology, different cultures and communities are confronted with each other, as Marie Nelson in his article “Inescapable Past” said

Most of the characters in Desai’s novel, including the Judge, Sai, Gyan (Sai’s boyfriend), Noni and Lola (Sai’s tutors) and Biju, all have experiences where their identity comes in contact with a foreign culture. (68)

But the domination of the West over the East is always there, which gives birth to the strong negative reactions, illuminating divisions between cultures that exist even today.

These divisions sometimes have not very constructive affects on the lives of the victims. The judge hates anything which is Indian and he loves to accept English things, ways of life and mannerisms. He loves to be extremely abusive and rude to his wife, Nimi. He wants to reconstruct her identity, "He would teach her the same lessons of loneliness and shame he had learned himself" (170) and ultimately she is forced to commit suicide.

Jemubhai's obsession with the ideas of the west arouses the feelings of resentment and anger in him and ultimately he becomes doubly displaced. He neither becomes an English man nor remains an Indian one. He becomes an exact prototype of dual identity none of his own. This is what happens with a number of migrants with American dream in their eyes. In spite of being bicultural, they are left with no particular culture to which they can call their own.

Young orphaned girl Sai has presented the problems of an alienated Indian, who has been educated in westernized manners in India. Even in postcolonial India, the minds of Indians are still colonized and they are tailored in such a way to accept Western ideologies and reject Indian ones. All the major characters of the novel, Biju, his father, who is a cook to the retired judge in Kalimpong, Sai is an orphan girl, lives with her grandfather, Noni and Lolita, felt fascinated by the idea of the West.

So often the collision of any different societies is violent and filled with fear and resentment. In the novel, we see that it is rare that two separate cultures can always coincide peacefully, without one ever trying to dominate the other. The novel is filled with examples of racism and hatred that tears at your heartstrings. (Nelson 67)

When Biju goes to the USA, he feels estranged at the distant land. But like all migrated people, first he felt fascinated at the idea of going abroad. All of his illusions feel a setback. While working in basement kitchens of New York, he realizes that people from everywhere journeyes there to work. They are not provided with congenial atmosphere at all, of what they have dreamt of, rather they are ascribed with such tags, "Uloo ka patha, Son of an owl, low-down son-of

a-bitch Indian” (22). They are often called with these names, being a minority, in a foreign land they cannot complaint to anybody about the atrocities faced by them.

The Judge’s Cook and his son are trying to voice the true feelings of the marginalized people. When Biju goes to America, he has to suffer a lot; he has made to realize at every moment that he is an Indian. Then the owner brings all kinds of conditioners and deodorants to wash out Indian smell from his body. “He smells”, said the owner’s wife. “I think that I am allergic to his hair oil (48)”. His experiences in America at the beginning are not very fine, Reena Sanasam in her article “Human Identities and Transculturalism in Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*” observes

Biju’s frustration on his experience in America is almost similar to the judge’s first experience in Britain. He realizes the emptiness and meaninglessness of himself and his likes who are struggling to eke out a living, leaving their loving families. (114)

Desai has traced different kinds of migrants. Rajni Singh in his article “The deplorable state of illegal immigrants in Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*” said

Kiran Desai sketches the two categories of immigrants-the one who manages to go back to homeland or set up an entire life in another country and the other who lives and dies as illegal immigrant in America and is never able to see families. (96)

A person moves from one place to the other for the better and well off future. Every person needs space for him or her everywhere, but being a minority, he or she needs more security. America is often called a land of dreams. Biju also dreamt of joining the American Dream. His dreams are completely shattered with his very first visit to his dreamland. But like most of the immigrants, he is forced to bear the pain of exile with a smile. His identity is also left in a limbo like Naipaul’s Willie and innumerable real life migrants. Illegal migration and temporary jobs makes the lives of migrants illegal. Willie assures his permanency at the foreign land by marrying an American girl, but all is fruitless.

Sasikanth Reddy in “Multicultural Factors in Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of loss*” states “Migrations across borders-geographical or otherwise – can be willful or forced. ‘Expatriates’ and ‘Immigrants’ belong to the formal category and ‘Exiles’ and ‘Refugees’ belong to the latter one”. (95)

The crossing of national, geographical and cultural boundaries has become the predicament of modern man. The crossing of borders heralds undoubtedly dislocation and displacement. Transnational cultural identity allows one to enter into new cultural terrains. And ultimately this leads to the endless process of becoming and evolving. Migrated people are ascribed with what Homi Bhaba argues cultural indeterminacy and hybridity, which rejects fixed identity. Cultural interactions left them with dual identities, and migrated people are left with no final and fixed identity of their own. "To be or not to be" (Shakespeare 64), Hamlet's dilemma becomes an integral part of their lives. Desai's Biju is also trapped in dual identity, by being an Indian by birth and the American identity by his own choice and somewhat due to his poor personal circumstances.

No doubt, India is a multicultural and multilingual land of diversities. But at the same time the differences on the basis of class and caste still exist there. The novel explores the lives of characters who are trapped in caste system both upper and lower caste. The miserable conditions of poor people are portrayed with sympathy and sometimes sarcasm by Desai. When judge send the cook to report to the policemen about the robbers at their home, the policemen come there and investigate his room. The condition of the cook's room is pitiable:

...how little he had: a few clothes hung over a string, a single razor blade and a sliver of cheap brown soap, a Kulu blanket that had once been hers, a cardboard case with metal clasps that had belonged to the judge and now contained the cook's papers, the recommendations that had helped him procure his job with the judge, Biju's letters, papers from a court case fought in his village...

(13)

Kiran Desai has shown the ground realities without fictionalising the facts and dark and dismal side of the life of Indian people. Even after independence, struggles in different communities are going on for their demand of their own nation-states. Gorkhas want their own place and state.

They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs. Here, where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim, and the army did pull-ups and push-ups, maintaining their tanks with khaki paint in case the Chinese grew hungry for more territory than Tibet, it had always been a messy map. (9)

GNLF is the result of all these struggles. These struggles were emerged with the demand of Gorkhas for a particular 'nation-state'. Gorkhas are always looked down upon even in their own country and this gives birth to the rise of GNLF.

The complexities of ethnic identities gave birth to different movements of self-sufficiency which came to the surface in different parts of the world at different times. The invasion of Britishers in India and the establishment of East India Company set the background for copious rebels in different parts of India. Due to geo-political importance of Darjeeling, it also becomes a centre of attraction for the Britishers. In the beginning of 19th century, the recruitment of Gorkhas in the British army has started, "all categories of Nepali-speaking recruits were known as 'Gorkha' in the British Indian Army" (Dasgupta 49)

From the beginning of 19th century, many changes have occurred in the political set up of India and in Nepal also. Atis Dasgupta in his research paper "Ethical Problems and Movements for Autonomy in Darjeeling" claims "Nestled as it were in the Singalila range of the eastern Himalayas, the territory of Darjeeling historically belonged to Sikkim and Bhutan". (47)

This process of merging and dismantling of political boundaries affect human relationships a lot. Kiran Desai has portrayed very minutely the construction of GNLF. Kalimpong, an Indian village nested in the foothills of the Himalayas subjected to great political tension with a sudden outburst of Nepali Nationalism. "Confusion was rampant among the 'haalf 'n' haf' crowd", (148) Negotiation of national identity, belonging, and co modification can be seen as an important part of the history and politics of Kalimpong.

From 1814, however, the territorial ambition of the Nepalese government came into open conflict with that of the East India Company; a number of battles were fought in the foothills of the Himalayas which culminated in the Nepalese accepting a cessation of hostilities on the terms proposed by the Company. (Burghart 101)

The demand of Nepalese people for a certain identity gave birth to many nationalist movements from time to time. Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), a separatist ethnic movement that violently engulfed the Himalayan foothills in the late 1980's, Kalimpong is painted by Desai as a part of her

inheritance. Like any political insurgency, GNLFF movement put Kalimpong in a situation, what Matthew Arnold has also suggested in his poem Dover Beach;

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and fight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night. (8)

The perpetual torture faced by Nepalese, forced them to think “It is better to die than to live as slaves” (126). Sometimes the atrocities committed upon the Gorkhas lead them to think that the complete injustice is done to them by the authorities. Some Indian people even think that the independence of India was favorable to people of some states only, but not to all.

In 1947, brothers and sisters, the British left granting India her freedom, granting the Muslims Pakistan, granting special provisions for the scheduled castes and tribes, leaving everything taken care of, brothers and sisters——

"Except us". EXCEPT US. The Nepalis of India. At that time, in April of 1947, the Communist Party of India demanded a Gorkhasthan, but the request was ignored. . . . (158)

In Kalimpong, people were suffering from the agony of betraying and bartering. This process leads to the loss of their identities, and they are not able to understand the new identities more or less imposed upon them. Their demand for their own state in which they can manage their own affairs, leads to their yearning for a particular and their own identity, which is always at the stake. Sometimes the outburst of their frustration gives birth to the movements like GNLFF.

Tapan K. Ghosh has also asserted this,

In Kiran’s India people are afflicted by incurable poverty and privation. Their minds are filled with anger and anguish that result from non-fulfillment of their basic needs and that lead them to resort to terrorist violence. (16)

Personal relations are considered as ornaments in Indian culture. But migration heralds distorted form of personal relations. Sai possess an unconventional background, although she is an orphan girl, yet she has many relatives in India. But actually what happens with her is “In a country full of relatives, Sai suffered a dearth” (28).

The deaths of migrants at the distant land even become crueler to them. The death of Sai's parents is more compassionate, "Thus they had died under the wheels of foreigners, amid crates of babushka nesting dolls. If their last thoughts were of their daughter in St. Augustine's, she would never know" (27).

Sai falls in love with her mathematics' tutor. Her parents died when she is of seven years. She finds solace in her relationship with Gyan, but this comfort is also momentary. And her relationship with Gyan is ended up by teaching her how the concerns of personal relations by and large political concerns. The political upheavals teach them the same lesson, what Forster has proclaimed in his novel *A Passage to India* "No, not yet", and the sky said, "No, not there" (362).

The Cook is leading, in a way, a life of a slave. Although Biju migrates to the USA, but he is also forced to live as a slave. The Judge himself is a slave of western customs and western ways of accepted wisdom. Slavery in any form is a curse. It provides one with nothing but distorted history, borrowed culture, and a lot of rebellious feelings. Only captive people can explain their sufferings, as only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches. People of many countries of the world remained captive at one time or the other. In Naipaul's *Magic Seeds*, Willie's sister tells Willie: "It is how imperialism works. It is what happens to captive people. And since in India we have no idea of history we quickly forget our past and always believe what we are told"(Naipaul 1). One who is bound, is not free to think and do whatever he or she wants to do, and is left with enforced way of life, history and imposed culture.

Desai is interested in portraying the constructed realities rooted in the minds of Indian people about India and the foreign countries. Some of Indian people themselves think that India is not a place worth living, although when they migrate to the other parts of the world especially in Western countries, their illusions felt a setback. Like Noni, they think they should grab every opportunity of shifting to the so called Western countries for the fulfillment of their dreams. Kiran Desai has realistically portrayed in the novel the causes and harsh effects of migration.

Disease. War. Famine. Noni exclaimed and was outraged... "Better leave sooner rather than later," she had advised Pixie long ago, "India is a sinking ship. Don't want to be pushy, darling, sweetie,

thinking of your happiness only, but *the doors won't* stay open forever....” (47)

The title of novel itself is very significant, as the inheritance of the judge is the inheritance of colonialism. He is a self seeking migrant and is a true representative of the elite class's nihilism. He does not behave well with his wife, Nimi, he used to beat her because he has learnt all this from his father, that is of course his inheritance. Sai's relationship with her mathematics tutor also ends in nothingness.

The Inheritance of Loss (here after referred to as Inheritance), primarily centers around Sai's failed romance with her Gorkha tutor Gyan. The setting is a Himalayan border town of Kalimpoing, which is, on one hand, a haven for retired inheritors of colonial legacy and, on the other, a hot bed for GNLf activists. (Khandit 173-174)

Desai has projected on the one hand, America as the most preferred destination for the jobless and poor people of different countries of the world, and America's cunning policy of exploiting the poor countries for the cheap labor on the other.

The minds of colonized and minority people are made up in such a way that they are forced to think whatever they are made to think. America becomes a land of their dreams without residing at the place. The girl's studying there, does not want to remember their past history and culture but they wish to have foreign partners.

“She won't look at an Indian boy; she doesn't want a nice Indian boy who's grown up chatting with his aunties in the kitchen.”

“What does she want then?”

“She wants the Marlboro man with a Ph.D.” (50)

Indian girls and boys want foreign husbands and wives for them, and all of them want English names and “*Angrezi khana*” (17). This wish of these people is responsible for making another world of imagination, which remains a mirage for the whole of the lives of Indian people.

Desai's pen defines her keen observation of men, manners and goings-on of the world. She has enough courage to raise voice against such crucial issues like political controversies, and it's very much clear from her lucid description

about GNLF. Only a few writers can write with such boldness “Gorkhaland for Gorkhas” (7)

Another excellent feature of Kiran Desai’s pen is that she is always sympathetic to marginalized and suppressed people. While writing her novel, she is undoubtedly on the side of the unfortunate Biju, who is left only with his shattered illusions about America at the foreign land. Just like the Judge, Biju has inherited nothing but sheer loss and his thoughts ended up at the point that “it is a meaningless enterprise to go on dreaming about a bright future in the US living a hand-to-mouth existence” (Sheeba 334).

Even after the independence of India, the traces of colonialism are still there. Postcolonialism is that kind of condition which needs to be cured. But the difficulty is that of returning to the troubles of colonialism. Biju is presented by Desai as a symbol representing all the Gorkhas who want their own place in the world and their own nation-state. Kiran Desai has portrayed the condition of Biju very sympathetically. He went to America with the hope of assimilation, and his return to India shows his ultimate wish of coming back to roots, but his homecoming was even more pitiable than his emigration.

Amidst the crowd of immigrants, Biju appears to be the only one who is willing to hold on to purist. His refusal to serve beef in cafes or keeping away from prostitutes distinguishes him as a misfit in the new world. (Khandait 177)

He thinks himself to be the luckiest boy in the world, as the Cook also boasts of his son’s state of sheer contentment in America. But he is not at all aware of the realities faced by Biju in the USA. His refusal of accepting all the western customs blindly makes him misfit in the foreign culture and his ultimate coming back to his home.

In English literature, we have many instances of writer’s respect, love and sense of a particular place. What Robert Frost felt for New Hampshire, Thomas Hardy for Wessex and R. K. Narayan felt for Malgudi, Kiran Desai has the same feelings for Kalimpong. Robert Frost has also commended this

“The land was ours before we were the land's
She was our land more than a hundred years
Before we were her people”. (467)

Everybody feels a sense of belongingness to the inherited land where one lives and to which one belongs. Like William Wordsworth, many writers also portray the different shades of the land to which one belongs. Neeru Tandon has also expressed the similar views regarding Kiran Desai's sense of place "The question occurs why Kiran Desai chose Kalimpong as a setting? The answer lies in the fact that Desai has had an abiding connection with Kalimpong since her childhood." (89)

Kiran Desai has exploited the beauty of Kalimpong to the utmost degree. She has exactly painted her descriptions with local color. She has lived for a long time in India and penned down whatever she has felt while living in India. Being a literary writer she has a keen sense for portrayal of beauty. Even the novel begins with describing the beauty of Kalimpong.

All day, the colors had been those of dusk, mist moving like a water creature across the great flanks of mountains possessed of ocean shadows and depths. Briefly visible above the vapor, Kanchenjunga was a far peak whittled out of ice, gathering the last of the light, a plume of snow blown high by the storms at its summit. (1)

Her love and intimacy with Kalimpong is very much clear from her minute descriptions of the beauty of the place. And the migration of a person poses the biggest and direct threat to one's this sense of belongingness. Most of diasporic writers like V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Jumpa Lehari, Manju Kapoor, Bharti Mukherjee, and many contemporary writers have penned down this sense of loss of home and particular identity. Their coming back to roots remains like an illusion for them for the whole of their lives.

Narendra Khandit in his article "Reclamation of Inheritance: Biju's Homecoming in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*" has illustrated the harsh effects of globalization.

She first projects Amercia as the most preferred destination for the jobless youth from the Third World countries. This, on one hand, could be seen as an acknowledgment of America's success in selling its dream to the world and, on the other, could also be a critique on American policy of exploiting the poor countries for cheap labour. (174)

People migrate from one place to the other, but sometimes this displacement becomes life denying as in the case of Biju. Harish Harry, Zangibari, Saeed Saeed all sing Indian songs to feel their sense of belongingness. They all are caught between dual self and try to cling to their inherited Indian identity. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in their magnum opus *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature* state

A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. (8)

When one is displaced, of course one gets a new place, but the major issue comes into being is loss of one's own identity. The displaced, mute, and alienated persons do not feel at home at the new place and the nostalgic feelings of their homeland become the whole of their lives. The temporary jobs, the change of their names and their efforts of the acceptance of western mannerisms provides nothing but temporary solace to the migrants at the foreign lands. The relatives of the migrant people at the home land start living with the dream of having foreign grand children, without knowing that their children are not able to eat two times meal.

Sometimes the critics have remarked on Desai's nihilistic vision of life, pessimistic and somber mood, and her attitude of nothingness but Desai herself said in an interview in 2006 on the Man Booker prize website,

In a world obsessed with national boundaries, and belonging as a novelist working with a form also traditionally obsessed with place, it was a journey to come to this thought, that the less structured, the multiple, may be a possible location for fiction perhaps a more valid ethical location in general.

With her cosmopolitan attitude, "Kiran Desai's broad global perspective makes sense". (Alessio 84) When Kiran Desai presents the beauty of Kalimpong, it is as clear and realistic as she herself knows hills and valleys of Darjeeling. Her picaresque descriptions of America and especially of Harlem defines her keen observations and her globalised outlook towards life.

Hopping from one job to another, self-scorn, alienation, loss and deprivation but the only hope of the Green card is the trademark of migrated human beings, “He was illegal, his taxi was illegal, his yellow paint was illegal... (99).

Biju is a symbol of all the emigrants who want to make their fortunes in places like heaven. Biju, like innumerable daily migrants felt disillusioned when he went to the idealized place of his dreams on the earth. Innumerable workers and laborers migrate to the foreign lands for the better and well off future. But there is a world of difference between the reality and the dreams. Desai has used Biju as a symbol to show the realities concerned with migration.

Just as V.S Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas* traces the collapse of the dream of the Indian immigrant Biswas in Trinidad, Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss* follows the trail of the utter failure of the American Dream of the novel’s hero Biju. The readers of both the novels may agree that both Biswas and Biju are cousins with the same blood group. (Sheeba 332)

There is a common feeling of resentment, frustration and homelessness in every person at the alien and the land away from his or her home. Ultimately Biju felt misfit everywhere. He felt as an unwanted foreigner and who can place himself nowhere. He felt himself in a limbo like Naipaul’s hero Willie in *Half a life* and *Magic Seeds* and innumerable people who migrate to the foreign land with the hope of assimilation.

Just as the judge’s migrations clearly indicate cultural clashes which cause societal instability and disorder. It results in long lasting personal dilemmas. The acceptance of cultural hierarchy is even troublesome for Indians; the judge is the finest example of that. Finishing his secondary education in a mission school and college education in Cambridge, Jemubhai becomes a faithful follower of British way of life and mannerisms. Recruited as an ICS member, he tried his best to be an official by keeping up the British standards. He studies hard to obtain knowledge of the British culture and history. He is trying his best to fit himself in the Western frames. But all these efforts of him away from his own identity without providing him the expected identity. As Jayaraman in his article “John Peter Peterson or Jemubhai Popatlal Patel?: “The Uncanny” Doubleness and “Cracking” of Identity in Kiran Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss*” says that “Jemubhai”s experiences

succinctly capture the persistence of the “unhomely” in the home space and crack his identity” (57).

His mimicry of Western ways of life, the change of his name from Jemubhai to James and his wife’s name from Bela to Nimi Patel, to have bed tea every day, the cook said to Sai about this habit of the Judge “At five-forty-five I would take the bed tea on a tray to your grandfather’s tent” (61), to speak English in an English accent, reflects his thinking of that Britain represents a superior society to India. “It is both the cultural difference and identification with the cultural tradition that defines one’s identity; and the denegation of either may result in a state of loss” (Reddy 101).

The constructed identity leads to the loss of the real identity, as Ashcroft has also defined, “more English than the English” (4). His efforts of accepting the western mannerisms, provides only the dual identity to him. The Judge’s acceptance of Western way of life without knowing the realities associated with it, made him struck in identity crisis. He is left with deformed identity, and his own was no longer his own now. But “He blames the disorder of India on the Indians and the Indian culture rather than the colonizers” (Reddy 102)

The cultural hierarchy and racial stereotypes are deep rooted in the minds of Indian people. As the Judge, Biju, the cook, Panna Lal all think that Western culture is superior to the Indian. E. M. Forster has also expressed the same views in his novel *A Passage to India*, written in 1924. Mrs. Moore, Adela, Ronny and Fielding all of them directly or indirectly assert the superiority of the western culture. Both of them, Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested believe that the caves are not the place worth seeing and ultimately their experience of the caves is not very memorable and outstanding. The experience undermines Mrs. Moore’s religious faith and hastens her death. Both of them can only assume that they have not visited the right places of India.

All the characters as Biju, Jemubhai Patel, the Cook and Gyan time and again believe the assertion of Forster “All sorrow was annihilated, not only for Indians, but for foreigners, birds, caves, railways, and the stars; all became joy, all laughter; there had never been disease nor doubt, misunderstanding, cruelty, fear” (Forster 322-323). But their false hopes do not dangle up for a long time. Biju comes back to India with the buoyancy of homecoming. But he is beaten badly by the activists and for him his own Indian brothers. As the Judge possess the

inheritance of colonialism that is of loss, so is the inheritance of Biju, "What is inherited as "loss" are primarily the solipsistic pleasures of private life that English culture, and English books, have given to the world, standards of cultivation dismissed as so much personalism today" (Wilhelmus 346).

No doubt, the world is full of hatredness and violence, but still Desai has given a hidden message of hope in her novel. "The reality is that the world is full of racism, segregation, and cultural divisions, but it does not mean that hope does not also exist. Change can happen if people initiate it" (Nelson 72). This segregation and cultural divisions can be stopped if people commence it with courage and determination. "The five peaks of Kanchenjunga turned golden with the kind of luminous light that made you feel, if briefly, that truth was apparent. All you needed to do was to reach out and pluck it" (357). Biju and father are announcing reunion and a message of hope at the end.

"Biju and Panna Lal-two inheritors of loss, who were separated from each other by the claims of modernity and the blinding desire for a better life-are finally united" (Ghosh 67). Both of them meet each other in the same way just as the peaks of Kanchenjunga are announcing reunion. In spite of the deep-rooted differences as B. P. Giri affirms that Kiran Desai "is keenly aware that she lives and writes in a divided world-divided by nationalisms and colonialisms, but also by gender, class and ethnic afflictions" (76). Still she has deep rooted hope of a new and peaceful world in her mind. Nelson in his article "Inescapable Past" claims "In the mist of chaos and cultural division, home, family, identity, and history are what hold people together and allow them to survive the day" (72).

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CHAPTER 3

Alien and Limbotic: Willie Somerset Chandran's *Half a Life*

“In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself” (Fanon 179).

The world of Fanon, displaced, alienated and in the continuous process of creating, is very much like one of the best known writers of Indian English Literature, Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul who is a Trinidad born British novelist who possesses Hindu culture and heritage and Indo-Trinidadian ethnicity. Born in 1932, he won Booker Prize in 1971 and Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001. Naipaul's writings have appeared at regular intervals throughout half a century from 1957 to 2004, amounting to around thirty titles and with several re-editions. With a long list of writings and awards to his credit, Naipaul undoubtedly claims fame on the international front. Themes of alienation, migration, displacement, rootlessness, mockery and self-deception pervade throughout his works.

In Naipaul's writings, there is always a resonant voice that is of “an area of darkness” (Nixon 67). In most of his writings, colonists come and conquer, empires rise and fall, new societies emerge, but darkness always remains an integral part of colonial and postcolonial lives possessing the false hopes of assimilation. Naipaul has candidly penned down the experiences of his own life. Rob Nixon, in his well known critique of Naipaul *London Calling V.S. Naipaul Post Colonial Mandrain* says

Naipaul's familial and personal displacements figure so boldly in both his work and its critical reception that he has come to be celebrated as the ultimate literary apatriote, the most comprehensively uprooted of twentieth-century writers and the most bereft of national affiliations. (17)

His displacements and burden of insurmountable estrangements in a way provides a framework for his writings. Naipaul feels estranged and alienated where ever he goes. Nanda Kishore Mishra in his article “Trajectory of Displacement: Expatriate Sensibility of Naipaul” explores “As a writer without roots, Naipaul has spared no one. He has said harsh things about Trinidad, India, America, Pakistan, and Argentina etc” (149). His abhorrence against India becomes clear when he comes back to India with the dreams which shattered

completely after his revisit to India. In his early works, his appalling views about Islam are quite apparent.

Bhasker A. Shukla in his critique on Indian English Literature after Independence writes about Naipaul "Beginning with finding the centre, Naipaul's writings moved away from critical analysis of the problems of freedom" (167). The leitmotifs -displacement, insecurity, and disorientation are incorporated through the drifting existence of his protagonists. The indeterminate state of his protagonists describes the problems of innumerable migrants. But the major difference of Naipaul's protagonists is that migration has become an integral part of their lives. Quest for a particular identity, alienation and rediscovery of one's own self defines the whole of their lives.

Naipaul's works mainly consist of novels, short stories, and essays. He appeared at the literary front in 1957 with his comic novel, *The Mystic Masseur*. His fiction includes *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958), *Miguel Street* (1959), *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963), *The Mimic Men* (1967), *A Flag on the Island* (1967), *In a Free State* (1971): won Booker prize, *Guerrillas* (1975), *A Bend in the River* (1979), *Finding the Centre* (1984), *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), *A Way in the World* (1994), *Half a Life* (2001), and its sequel, *Magic Seeds* (2004).

His non-fiction covers *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies – British, French and Dutch in the West Indies and South America* (1962), *An Area of Darkness* (1964), *The Loss of El Dorado* (1969), *The Overcrowded Barracoon and Other Articles* (1972), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977), *A Congo Diary* (1980), *The Return of Eva Peron and the Killings in Trinidad* (1980), *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981), *A Turn in the South* (1989), *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), *Homeless by Choice* (1992, with R. Jhabvala and Salman Rushdie), *Bombay* (1994, with Raghbir Singh), *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples* (1998), *Between Father and Son: Family Letters* (1999, edited by Gillon Aitken), *Reading & Writing: A Personal Account* (2000), *The Writer and the World: Essays* (2002), *Literary Occasions: Essays* (2003, by Pankaj Mishra), *A Writer's People: Ways of Looking and Feeling* (2007), *The Masque of Africa: Glimpses of African Belief* (2010).

Naipaul's cosmopolitan outlook and attitude proffers him with diverse themes. Imraan Coovadia in his book *Authority and Authorship* in V. S. Naipaul states

Naipaul sets his fiction on Caribbean islands and in invented sub-Saharan states while his travel writing encircles the globe. His imaginative energies have been consistently invested in regions far removed from his British residence and from the sureties of metropolitan existence. (2)

A House for Mr. Biswas is significant as Naipaul's first work to achieve acclaim worldwide and launching him into international fame and renown. The story of Mr. Mohun Biswas is inspired from the life of his own father and his wish of having a house of his own is somewhat like his protagonist of *Half a Life*, Willie Somerset Chandran. His obsession with the notion of owning a house becomes a symbol of his independence and merit. "The succession of houses in which he lives—mostly as a tenant—forms a structural pattern which covers many aspects of Hindu life in pre-Independence Trinidad and, by extension, the colonial psychology" (Thieme 1356).

An Area of Darkness (1964) is a travelogue detailing Naipaul's trip through India in the early sixties. It is the first of Naipaul's acclaimed Indian trilogy which includes *India: A Wounded Civilization* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now*. The acute sense of disillusionment, which the author experiences on his first visit to his native land, is described in this travelogue. Naipaul's frustration against the disorder in his native land is akin to his portrayal of hatred against injustice in *Half a Life*.

Alpana Mishra in her article "V. S. Naipaul's *Half a Life*: A Critical Study" explores the novel as "*Half a Life* reads as a study in estrangement and inner exile" (193). *Half a Life* is a novel of displacement and identity quest of its main character Willie. Like Naipaul's many other works, this novel also has some autobiographical features. Willie is trying to find a particular identity, and certain place in the world to which he can call his own. His uprootedness and displacement is responsible for making him an exiled Indian.

Half a Life has been divided in three main chapters. The first chapter has been named as *A Visit from Somerset Maugham* describing the story of Willie's father's life, who himself is the narrator in this chapter, delineates the childhood

and early youth of Willie. K. H. Mehta while analyzing Naipaul's works "V. S. Naipaul's Narration of Fictional Auto/ Biographies" states

Chandran's father is a typical product of the Naipaulian half-made society. He is sandwiched between the colonial oppression and postcolonial anarchy. His personality has been shaped by the imported ideologies of the West and he stands cut off from his native roots. (160)

Naipaul's product of Naipaulian half-made society Willie's father, decides Willie's life and sends him to London for higher studies with the help of scholarship. The First Chapter is the name of second chapter, which deals with Willie's experiences at London College and Notting Hill by using the technique of third person narrative. It entails significance as with the beginning of this chapter the first chapter of Willie's life begins. And the third chapter has been named as A Second Translation; it covers second and complete translation in Willie's life. Willie's passage of Africa and an unnamed island has been mapped out in this chapter. Willie realizes the actual emptiness of his life during his visit to Africa. The novel Half a Life ends when Willie is about forty one years old. From the third person narrative the narrative shifts to first person narrative till the end of the novel.

Its sequel Magic Seeds (2004) begins in Berlin where Half a Life ends. "IT HAD BEGUN many years before, in Berlin. Another world" (Naipaul, Magic seeds 1) Willie's five months in Berlin, seven to eight years in India, and his life in London forms the composition of Magic Seeds, announcing the very idea of Willie's life "...a setting perhaps he had not yet learned to see, he was like a man taken out of himself. He had become someone else" (Naipaul, Magic Seeds 3). With the use of third person narrative in this novel, it ends when Willie is of fifty two years.

In a room full of strange faces, even a mirror comes as a relief because therein one can see a familiar face. Half a Life is the story of a race in search of a familiar face in the mirror; the irony however lies in the fact that even the mirror reflects a face which is not recognizable. (Choubey 1)

Willie longs for a particular self for the whole of his life. He inherits this quest for identity from his father. He becomes a true representative of the ironical

state of diaspora. As in a mirror, one can see a familiar face. But Willie is even not able to do that. He leaves the mission school on the call of Gandhi. He moves from India to London when he is only twenty years old. He lives there with the help of a scholarship. The moment his scholarship ends, he is indirectly forced to leave London. With Ana from here he moves to Germany with the hope of assimilation. But all his efforts finish in nothingness. He just thinks “I’ve done nothing” (227)

Naipaul’s Willie Somerset Chandran, an Indian by birth, whose father is Brahmin and mother is Dalit. The borrowed part of Willie’s name “Somerset” (1), shows the vain efforts of the colonized people to fit themselves in the provided frames. Their quest for a certain and their own identity which ultimately abscond them in a limbo, portrays the true definition of postcolonialism. His father has given the name, Willie Somerset Chandran, who himself does not know much about the writer Somerset Maugham, but he has named his son just to show his westernization: “I am not sure. Listen and make up your own mind” (1).

Willie’s father marries a low caste woman not because he loves her but because she fits his image of sacrifice. Willie has written a number of stories, one of the stories written by Willie during his childhood days titled “A Life of Sacrifice” (47). The story follows the life of a Brahmin, who ritually sacrifices backward children for the sake of his own riches and prosperity and ends up by sacrificing his own two children. Willie’s father also sacrifices Willie for the sake of his living by sending him to England, “The boy will poison what remains of my life. I must get him far away from here” (43). Thus with and without his wish Willie moves from one place to another for the whole of his life. S. S. Sharma in his article “Identity and Sensuality in V. S. Naipaul’s *Half a Life*” illustrates “Hence the first transition makes him a casteless ‘exile’ in London. The second transition takes him away from London and from having to earn a regular living. He goes to Mozambique as virtually Ana’s kept man” (174).

Willie used to write stories in his childhood and starts writing the stories again in London with the hope of gratification of his soul, acceptance and assimilation in the foreign culture but with little achievement. Willie tries to follow what his friend Roger; a British lawyer has taught him “Life doesn't have a neat beginning and a tidy end. Life is always going on. You should begin in the middle and end in the middle and it should all be there” (83).

Willie writes new stories and reshapes and collects his stories he has written in India. He takes these stories to Roger for getting them published. Roger inspires him to write the stories like Hemmingway and should abandon reality “What is interesting to me as a lawyer is that you don't want to write about real things” (83).

Life constantly teaches us new lessons. Willie learns a lot from his day to day experiences at London. Bhagabat Nayak in his paper “Disorientation of Identity in V. S. Naipaul’s Half a Life” observes

In London, Willie understands two things: one, that he is free to be much more than he could be within reason and remake himself and his past and his ancestry, two he finds by a chance that his love with Ana, a mixed race girl from Africa true and sincere for the first time in his life he feels to be in the presence of someone who accepts him completely. (256-257)

In his continuous efforts of finding himself, he tries to remake himself. By doing something notable like writing books, he wants to re-establish his family history which entails a number of failures. In the company of Ana, he gets the chance to be what he really is. But that illusion of Willie soon feels a setback. His efforts of finding his identity include one more failure. Willie's negation of self begins in his childhood itself. His awareness of his mother's low caste and the resultant low status of his father instill a sense of shame in him, and his efforts to survive forces him into a world of falsehood, a make-believe world. Willie's life ends in nowhere. According to Paul Theroux “The novel ends nowhere. It is about nothing, just an assortment of Naipaul situations and remarks” (qtd. in Mishra, Alpana 219). Willie's life starts as a failure and even ends in a failure. Till the end of the novel, Willie’s existential search continues and the novel is left open. Jean Paul Sartre in his Being and Nothingness says “Being is. Being is in itself. Being is what it is” (xlii). If being is what it is, Willie strives hard to find what he is for the whole of his life.

Christine Daigle in his treatise on Jean Paul Sartre asserts “The world is full of differences, categories, objects, space and time in the world of phenomena for consciousness. It is consciousness that introduces such distinctions and thus generates a world” (33). The world Willie encounters is also full of these

differences which questions his existence. Larissa Rohde in his thesis *The Network of Intertextual Relations in Naipaul's Half a Life and Magic Seeds* says

...the genuine desire of individuals to make sense of the world, as expressed through Willie's existential yearning for finding a place in it and the collective mind of Hindu religion, which, in the way it is portrayed in the narrative, is more concerned with power and its own survival as an institution than it is with spiritual quests. (160)

Willie's story portrays how mythic traditions and stereotypes of a culture affect the psychological lives of individuals and offers continuous failures to Willie. But *Half a Life* is not only a story of failure; it is also a story of progress. A well known novelist, literary critic and also a translator J.M. Coetzee defines the novel as: "Half a Life is a story of the progress of a man from a loveless beginning to a solitary end that may turn out to be a true end, just a plateau of rest and recuperation" (qtd. in Mishra, Alpana 193).

Naipaul himself is a believer of the fact that identity is not given rather constructed. Name of a person more or less constructs his identity. The middle of Willie Somerset Chandran's name Somerset describes Homi Bhaba's concept of "mimicry" (90), the efforts of colonized people to be like the colonizers as in case of Indian people, they try to imitate the Britishers. Homi K. Bhaba in his *The Location of Culture* says "In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy" (90). The process of re-articulation of representation of identity just refers to mere copying of the dominated ideologies. While imitating the dominated ideologies, one can copy the other thing, but sometimes it happens at the expense of loss of one's own originality. This is what happens in the process of one's mere imitation of the Western frames. This very process of naming then leads to the process of misnaming.

Everybody wants space and a particular identity in the world. Even if one is a migrant, the need of a particular identity remains the same even at a new place. This is what happens with Willie also. He moves from India to England, then to Africa and finally to Germany in the quest of a particular identity. But his search for a particular identity ends in his more and more alienation.

Floating in the bottomless sea of multiculturalism, for a while Willie seems to have found his ground when all of a sudden he comes to a realization ... In search of his identity in a strange world Willie again

projects a borrowed, make-believe identity and ventures to live the image once again. (Choubey 1)

Willie's migrations provide him nothing except a make-believe identity. Anna Izabela Cichon while writing "Identity Trajectories in V. S. Naipaul's Work" says "Willie Chandran, a man on the move... a story of personal failure and personal integration" (57). He feels lost as if he is in a limbo. The Bohemian culture at Notting Hill, London is not at all familiar and affable for him but he is not able to figure out his own culture too.

Willie's learning of different languages and sexual skills from Percy Cato provides him temporary solace for the simple reason that he feels now he will learn the other culture absolutely. Percy loves to dress impeccably like English people and Willie also tries to learn these skills from him and "he had to re-learn everything that he knew. He had to learn how to eat in public. He had to learn how to greet people and how, having greeted them..." (58) While learning these skills, Willie learns to love June, his girlfriend as Percy loves her. But June marries her childhood friend and forgets both Percy and Willie.

Willie's sister Sarojini comes to his hostel for some days and asks him about his future plans. Willie tells her that he has written a book of stories, which is about to publish. Sarojini makes Willie understand the moral of the life, "And then there'll be something else to wait for, and then there'll be something after that. This is your father's life" (117). Now he should think seriously about life and career. Otherwise his life will also prove a failure like his father. He will not be able to do anything worthwhile as his father has not done.

In his zeal to follow Mahatma Gandhi, Willie's father, South Indian Brahmin, marries a backward caste class mate. He regrets his decision till the end of his life. In the same way Willie's life repeats the same story. The half caste son of his father, Willie goes to London for study and marries an African girl Ana. Ana is half Portuguese and half native, with her mixed African background ranks below Portuguese and above the mixed blood persons. Willie gets this caste discrimination in inheritance. After living eighteen years with his wife, Willie is troubled by the idea of marrying an untouchable. Willie moves to an unnamed African country, fashioned after the Portuguese colony of Mozambique. He feels himself unable to cope with the guerrilla disruption of their community, and he goes to Berlin, where his sister Sarojini lives with her husband. After living

eighteen years with his mixed caste wife, like his father Willie realized that he is not able to live with her. His realization makes him say, "I am forty-one. I am tired of living your life" (227). Willie finds himself living Ana's life, not his own. He abandons Ana and his borrowed life. The novel ends when Willie is of forty-one years, and the narrative is left open. Its sequel *Magic Seeds* begins where *Half a Life* ends.

Another thematic concern of the novel is the harsh effects of colonialism, especially on the minds of Indian people. In the postcolonial world, people who are once oppressed are left to lead half lives "Willie is the most fitting example of this halfness of life" (Vishnu 268). Almost all the characters of Naipaul are striving for the fullness and meaning of their lives. Ashwini Kumar Vishnu in his critique of *Half a Life: A Reading in Sense, Sensibility and Sensuality* relates

Percy Cato, Marcus, Graca, Ana, Sarojini, Jacinto, Ricardo, Carla, the Noronhas, the Correias, Aivaro et. al. are all searching for the fullness of their lives. In this quest for fullness and self-realization they find themselves clamped to unforeseen situations. Having no other choices they continue to thrive on whatever comes on their way. (268)

Ultimately as all the characters of *Half a Life* have no other choice except clinging to the false hopes of assimilation. And this quest for identity and inequality defines the lives of marginalised people. They always try to fit themselves in the frames of the west. But in this process they neither remain orient nor become occident. Edward Said, a well known Palestinian American literary theorist and critic in his treatise *Orientalism* says "...neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the other". (xii)

Whether this concept of the 'other' really exists or not has been much debated. But Willie Chandran has to face this definition of the other throughout his life. When he was in India, first his father left his study due to the call of Mahatma Gandhi. Willie was admitted in a "caste school" (37), where the students and teachers used to tease him by asking about his father's business. The concept of duality comes in his life, he feels himself caught between his past and his present. He can neither cling to his Indian ancestry nor finds himself comfortable in new circumstances. He can only express his nostalgia for his past twenty years he has

spent in India with his mixed caste parents and sister Sarojini. "A letter came to Willie from India. Envelopes from home had a special quality... They were of local recycled paper; Willie could easily imagine himself back there, without hope" (111).

He tries to console himself by such hopes that everything will be fine in India. Like most of the migrated people, he feels nostalgic about his homeland and parents. Willie's life becomes what Gauri Shankar Jha says "inscribes a fragmented self, situated in the troubled history of ethnic hatred and discrimination exile and dispossession, homelessness and frustration" (116).

V.S. Naipaul himself has faced this type of quandary throughout his life, exile, discrimination, the quest for a particular nation, place and identity, as he has described in most of his writings. Naipaul states in his novel *A Bend in the River* "The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it" (5). He believes in the person himself to assert his place in the world with his own efforts. His migration from one place to the other has also become the reason of his loss of identity. Being an Indian by ancestry, a Trinidadian by birth, and an Englishman by education, V. S. Naipaul possesses a multi-cultural background. As a colonial, he has always needed to locate his place in the world through writing.

Another feature of Postcolonialism is the process of befitting in the Western frames. Willie's mother too tries to be like white people. When Willie's father goes to see Willie's mother in a canteen where she used to drink tea, his father notices how she tries to hide her black skin with the fear of neglect. "For the first time I saw that she used powder. There was a thin white bloom on her cheeks and forehead; it made the black skin matt, and you could see where the powder ended and the shiny skin showed again" (12). Both the children Willie and his sister inherit this sort of mimicry of life from their parents. Willie wants to try his fortune in London and Sarojini, Willie's sister wants an international marriage, without knowing anything about the foreign countries and their cultures.

Sarojini's only hope lay in an international marriage, but I must say this took me by surprise. I am sure he has a wife somewhere, but perhaps it isn't good to ask too much... Your mother is quite glad to get the girl off her hands, but it will be no surprise to you that she is

pretending she isn't. I don't know where this thing will end or how it will work out for poor Sarojini. (113)

Willie's father is worried about Sarojini's future in Germany, but he is happy with the fact that he has found an international groom for his daughter. Willie's search for a perfect bride ends with Ana. He feels very much alienated in London, and he further moves to Africa with Ana. But his migration provides him nothing but even greater sense of alienation. One day Willie slips in front of the Estate house. Then the world really seems to him as full of "slippery substances" (135). He wants to get rid of such a life and such relations: "I mean I've given you eighteen years. I can't give you any more. I can't live your life any more. I want to live my own" (136).

Willie faces more complexities of life at Africa. Even the maid in Estate house calls him "Ana's London man" (142) He goes from India to London to construct his own self which is not possible for him in India, as he first thinks. His experiences even in India are not very rich as he is forced to live half a life there, being half a Brahmin and half untouchable. His father is a Brahmin and his mother is an untouchable. Willie thinks that in a new state of affairs he will be free of such tags, but his hopes are questioned everywhere. "Willie thinks, "It's something I have learned since I came here. Everything goes on a bias. The world should stop, but it goes on" (113).

Postcolonial discourses talk about the location of culture. "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" (Fanon 24). Willie is not able to get solace, first in his own hometown. Then his efforts of befitting himself in foreign cultures proved useless. His relations with borrowed girlfriends Serafina, June and Graca, the wife of the new manager are very much short lived. His relations with Graca create complexities in his life. Ana comes to know about it. It sets another background for his homelessness. In this process he really forgets what Fanon calls who he is. Willie says

When Ana came to the hospital courage came to me, and I told her I wanted to divorce her. When she came back later I said to her, "I am forty one. I am tired of living your life." "You wanted it, Willie. You asked. I had to think about it" (227).

When Willie asks Ana about the divorce, she realizes that she cannot decide it immediately. But one thing is certain that both of them are not happy with each other. Willie, Percy Cato, Ana, Willie's father, mother, Graca, all are leading half lives. Even those who seem to be living their own lives, such as Ana, declares that "perhaps it wasn't my life either" (227). Home does not provide only physical shelter but emotional protection too. For Graca's only wish of having a house of her own she has to pay a lot.

She blamed the nuns for her marriage. At a certain stage in the convent school they had begun to talk to her about becoming a nun. They did that with girls who were poor; and Graça's family was poor. Her mother was a mixed-race person of no fortune; her father was second-rank Portuguese, born in the colony, who did a small job in the civil service. (207-208)

Graca's wish for having a house of her own only increases her miseries. Due to the poverty of her family she has to marry a mixed race person. Even after her marriage, she is able to get a home, but it is also not her own. Carla's search for a home and particular identity also ends with the death of her husband. An expatriate person always wishes for an identity of his own. Theroux justifiably echoes Naipaul's rhetoric of displacement:

He ranks among the former colonials, transplanted people who can claim no country as their own. They travel because they belong nowhere; they cannot settle, they are constantly moving-in a sense they never arrive-and much of their travel is flight... (qtd. in Mishra, Nanda Kishore 149)

His displacement does not have any limits. His visit to Africa cause more alienation in his life. Willie's last effort of taking succor is his relation with Graca, the wife of new manager of the estate home. His relation with Graca, ends by providing an end to his long time relation with Ana. Like Colonial people, he tries his best to settle himself in new atmosphere even in Africa. He thinks about learning English when he comes to England. He tries to get solace with the help of writing his views on paper with the help of pen. "The act of writing these sketches brings him back to his past, to his mission school days; but, submerged in his play-acting, he enjoys the frenzy of playing the role of writer and reporter" (Colon 173). But his past comes forth and his wrench of memory of the past again mete

out on him. Like other memories of the past, his language of the past also place and replace him time and again. Ultimately Willie becomes a dupe in the hands of language. In the magnum opus *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin said

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place. (38)

Language is always used as a medium of self expression, but when it is borrowed from someone, and then the expressions of a person also becomes borrowed. Ultimately till his visit to Africa, Willie is left with no language of his own, neither the language of his stories nor the inherited one.

Willie was trying to deal with the knowledge that had come to him on the ship that his home language had almost gone, that his English was going, that he had no proper language left, no gift of expression. He didn't tell Ana. Every time he spoke he was testing himself, to see how much he still knew, and he preferred to stay in the cabin dealing with this foolish thing that had befallen him. (132)

Willie writes his stories in English, as he wants to use the privileged language. But this is only due to his use of language that Roger published his book, but he gives some critical remarks to it. It proves a bad experience for him that he forgets the idea of writing stories.

Willie faces all this exploitation in the foreign land, but since the advent of the East India Company in 1757, Britishers start exploiting Indians for their personal gains. "Things became worse when the British came" (5). In the same way this happens after a number of centuries in this so called modern world in the name of migrations. As in early eighteenth century, Britishers take the raw material from India and vend the readymade material to other countries and even in India with huge amount of profits. In the same way Willie writes his stories in India and gets them published in England and that also happens with the help of an English friend.

The concept of creation is what constructs the Orientals in the postcolonial world. Their creation left them deformed but not at all reformed. The presentation before them is done as reformed what Said has also illustrated in his book

Orientalism “Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense creates the Orient, the Oriental, and his world” (40). Sometimes this creation leads to the end of one's life. Postcolonial nations always need a particular identity, as the colonizers have. When they are able to get freedom after colonialism, they feel need of creation of their identities but this creation is done by the West. Willie is created by the circumstances in which he lives. Rather this creation leads to the obliteration of his identity in London. Willie, like other colonized people did not have any option of going back to his roots “the term ‘post-colonial’ to refer to “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft 143). But their identity ends to the present day; they don't have any option of going back to his roots. In a well known treatise on *The Location of Culture* Homi K. Bhaba is of the notion

Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of ‘minorities’ within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. (171)

Postcolonialism emerges from the discourses of minorities, as Bhaba suggests that even this concept of minority is very much geographically constructed. Minorities are forced to lead half lives, as Willie being not at home anywhere is looking at home everywhere. He always tries to find social equilibrium, but his search also ends in temporary social equilibrium. Willie's not being at home condition is very much like an exile. He was leading a life which is half-discovered, half-realized, and half lived. “Willie, “not being at home anywhere, but looking at home,” becomes a courier for the rebels, finds “a new way of feeling,” meditates on his surroundings” (Davis 345).

In search of a true end, Naipaul's characters move from one place to the other to find a particular identity for them. They are able to get only in-between culture, but not a particular culture of their own. As Homi K. Bhaba, well known Postcolonial critic in his book *The Location of Culture* says “Naipaul's people are vernacular cosmopolitans of a kind, moving in-between cultural traditions, and revealing hybrid forms of life and art that do not have a prior existence within the discrete world of any single culture or language” (193). Like Naipaul's other

characters, Willie also wants a culture and language of his own. In this search of a particular culture and language, Willie moves from one place to the other. A research scholar, Balkar Singh in his article "Naipaul's Mystic Masseur: A Quest for Identity Amidst Deracination" writes "Existence is meaningless unless it is expressed appropriately and language is the power and tool of expression. Displacement brings dispossession of this power which aggravates the sense of alienation" (4). Willie wants to learn African language to adjust himself fully in African society. His quest for learning English also deals with his identification with Britishers, and the language for his stories. Rob Nixon, a professor in University of Wisconsin, in his book *London Calling V.S. Naipaul Post Colonial Mandarin* states

Naipaul's familial and personal displacements figure so boldly in both his work and its critical reception that he has come to be celebrated as the ultimate literary apatriote, the most comprehensively uprooted of twentieth-century writers and the most bereft of national affiliations. (17)

Willie is a fine creation of Naipaul who has become a representative of this Postcolonial confusion and chaos. He feels himself in a limbo. Limbo is a state suffered by uprootedness, the marginal and the exiled. Willie also felt the same exile, as Naipaul has felt throughout his life. Willie and Naipaul's uprootedness and displacement becomes one at times. Walking in the streets of London, Willie thought that he is "walking on the red earth on either side of the asphalt, walking as if in wilderness" (134). His walking in the wilderness is like Samuel Beckett's "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (34)

By remaking his past, more to his liking or convenience, Willie is following his father's example, who had also decided to wear a mask which suited him best in his effort to find a place in society; as he says:

I began to acquire something like a reputation modest, but nonetheless quite real in certain quite influential intellectual or spiritual circles abroad. There was no escape now. In the beginning I felt I had trapped myself. But very soon I found that the role fitted. (31-32)

Willie's father also poses the mask of happiness like Willie himself. Willie tries his best to fit himself in Ana's frames, but he outburst at her one day, when Willie was in hospital. He declared at once that he wants to divorce her. "I mean

I've given you eighteen years. I can't give you anymore" (136). Sarojini also tried her best to fit herself in the provided frames. After her marriage, Sarojini comes to Willie in London, he himself feels embarrassed at her dressing sense of wearing socks with sari. After some time of her stay in Germany, she changed her dressing sense and life style completely to avoid slippery substances of the world around her. Like Willie, her father, Sarojini's efforts were also gone in vain. Willie thinks, "It's something I have learned since I came here. Everything goes on a bias. The world should stop, but it goes on" (113). Willie Chandran is a character travelling from a Third World country to London. His arrival in the metropolis is as puzzling as that of the author and his other Indians.

Willie comes to the figure of the Postcolonial migrant intellectual signifying a universal condition of hybridity. Homi K. Bhaba's view on the migrant experience in Postcolonial world can be recalled in this context:

Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. (112)

Displacement itself heralds the discrimination. Willie's displacement and his mimicry of the English culture are very much like his more and more uprootedness. Citizens of the Third World nations always feel the need of assimilation in the colonizer's culture. Willie's dreams are also shattered, like so many migrant people, when he goes to London the reality is very much clear before him. Kiran Desai's Biju also feels the same experience when he went to America. Willie's experiences are more unsympathetic in London:

He knew that London was a great city. His idea of a great city was of a fairyland of splendor and dazzle, and when he got to London and began walking about its streets he felt let down. He didn't know what he was looking at. (52)

Another thematic concern of the novel is that the home provides physical as well personal security. The need of a particular identity defines the completeness of a person's life. With the feeling of a particular home, one can even feel that he is very much placed and rooted in the world. Migration has become the need human beings in the Postcolonial world. Sometimes this migration provides the

concept of exile, as Willie has faced in his life. Naipaul's Mr. Biswas also feels the same disorder in his life:

A House for Mr. Biswas, generally regarded as Naipaul's most important book, Kelly properly emphasizes the two dimensions of the narrative stressed by other critics the house as the physical expression of Biswas's quest for personal dignity and freedom and the house as symbolic of the writer's need and ability to create imaginative order from the disorderliness of his surroundings. (Smyer 576)

Placement, displacement, loss of hopes, faiths, and dreams are the labels of the lives of these migrated people. Their displacement even deals with the prescribed frames those are provided by the west. As Said has also talked about the Eastern representations, that these oriental people cannot represent themselves, rather they must be represented.

The novel *Half a life* delineates the effects of the construction on the minds of colonized and minority groups. The study of this novel even traces the problems faced by the migrated people. The stereotypical image of the Eastern people, the process of their misnaming, language and the concept of othering defines their existence. Postcolonial theorist, cultural critic and historian, Robert J. C Young in his book *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*

Post colonialism claims the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being. The reality, though, is that the world today is a world of inequality, and much of the difference falls across the broad division between people of the west and those of the non-west. (2)

This world of inequality not only makes miserable the lives of people of the non-west but also set new norms for their lives. It is generally believed that Indian culture has the attribute of assimilation and acceptance. "Sir Vidya's is the outsider's insider's comprehension of Indian life. Several sketches of Indian social life are presented and an effort is made to derive substance out of them. This is the irony of authorship about India" (Tiwari 277). No doubt Naipaul has presented an outsider's views about India and Indian culture but sometimes his aggravation against India is quite clear. His protagonist Willie does not come back to India even till the end of the novel. This seems problematical to some critics of Naipaul.

Although in its sequel *Magic Seeds* Willie comes to India but again he settles in London till the end of the novel.

He leaves India with the only hope of assimilation in the other culture which is a mirage for him and he realizes this with his experiences in London. Naipaul's protagonist feels at odds in the new society too as he feels in his own earlier. "...the destruction of links to the past and to the land, the wounds created by the loss of the sense of history, and the efforts to heal this, which often only produce greater neuroses-are handled majestically in this book"(Mishra, Alpana 193).

Naipaul's this description of the loss of history and the efforts to heal this are completely visible in his portrayal of Willie Chandran. As James Wood says

Half a Life confirms Naipaul's stature as the greatest living analyst of the colonial and postcolonial dilemma; and those who have never approve of that analysis, and have objected over the years to what they see as Naipaul's fatalism snobbery and submerged radicalism, willingness to see things from the eyes of the disadvantaged. (qtd. In Mishra, Alpana 193)

Willie in a way has become Naipaul's messenger for the Indians. After his each new sexual experience, Willie thinks about his parents who have remained far away from this kind of experiences rather their sexual life is gradually absorbed in to melancholy. "Through Willie's reactions Naipaul sends this message to India: life is to be accepted fully and naturally, and any pose or 'make-believe' leaves one crippled and unable to enjoy life" (Haldar 233-234).

In his efforts of replacing the unseen by what he has seen during his first visit to India in early sixties, the character of Willie's father emerges. With a little difference from *An Area of Darkness* has been furnished with derogatory portrayal of Indian way of life. His search for an alternate civilization gets a sudden shock. "His search for an alternate civilization sanctified by the Orientalist lore received a setback, as he was rudely shocked by the abject poverty, corruption, pretensions, and intellectual complacency" (Haldar 234). Naipaul's dreams about India felt a set back during his visit to India and he has portrayed the same in his later works.

The title of the novel *Half a Life* is a very complex one as the meaning of life entails complexity. Terry Eagleton in his book *The Meaning of Life: A Very Short Introduction* has discussed "cultural life" (22), "everyday life" (25), "symbolic life"

(28), “modern life” (29) etc. and till the end of the book Eagleton thinks “...the meaning of life will prove to be fertile and productive. But in a world where we live in overwhelming danger, our failure to find common meanings is as alarming as it is invigorating” (101).

The title of the novel *Half a Life* is completely appropriate for describing the life of a person who moves from one place to another in the search of a particular identity and meaning of life. But he finds himself confused through the suffering of alienation. This crisis in Willie’s life brings him closer to the meaning of life what Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* has announced in Act V Scene V of the tragic play *Macbeth*

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (57)

Macbeth’s complains about the transience and nastiness of life is like Willie’s complaints against life, who himself is leading not his own life rather the borrowed one. Ana is also like an extension of Willie’s own image. In the company of Willie, she also leads a half life or hopes to borrow a life, and never to live the life to the full. Firstly Willie’s father, his mother, then Willie in India and later on in London and in Africa, even Ana, being a mixed caste person and Graca, all are leading dual lives or are caught between two identities. The half-lives of all these characters of the novel fully substantiate the title of the novel.

The title *Half a Life*, is justified not only because Willie is close to fifty when he leaves Ana and Africa, but also because, as he tells Ana, he spent all his mature years trying to grab a life he could call his own, in the knowledge that the life that was given to him had become unbelievable. (Nayak 260)

The half journey of Willie’s life, the half completion of his objectives of life, as he wants to be a writer but it is also half fulfilled, all this halfness constitutes Willie’s life “...the narration, divided in the middle, clearly demonstrates how Willie’s half-a-life ends almost in the middle of the book, in the middle of his life at forty-one” (Colon 178). Thus the title of the novel becomes completely resonant for describing the lives caught in duality and zilch.

Arvind Adiga, a well known Journalist and Indian writer in English, in his debut novel *The White Tiger* (2008) “presents the crude, dark and naked facts about India” (Khan 84). M Q Khan, Former Vice-Chancellor, Berhampore University, Orissa, in his article *The White Tiger: A Critique* writes “We are introduced to the poverty of rural Bihar and the evil of the feudal landlords” (84). Adiga’s protagonist, Balram, no doubt, differs from Naipaul’s Willie but both the novels uncover Indian poverty and class struggles. M Q Khan further in his article says “Although Naipaul’s account appears as one of outsider’s views on India, while Adiga’s accounts becomes that of an insider’s view on India... while Naipaul’s experiences of India are expressed through a global lens, Adiga looks at things purely from the Indian angle” (92).

Naipaul’s protagonist shares a common feeling of alienation with many protagonists of now days. J. M. Coetzee’s *Youth* also has the same protagonist as Naipaul’s Willie is alienated from the society he inherits, and the culture in which he tries to assimilate himself. “One of the most striking similarities between Naipaul’s main character Willie Chandran in *Half a Life* and John, the autobiographical figure in Coetzee’s *Youth*, is that they are in a constant state of alienation from their feelings” (Dooley 74). Willie falls in love so many times, but his feeling of alienation leads his inability to feel that he belongs to anywhere and even with anyone else. In *Youth* John faces the same problems. He also feels alienated from the society and is not able to share amiable relations with his girlfriends. “If John returns to South Africa he will be stifled, but if Willie returns to India he will return to nothing: to a life of blankness and meaningless ritual” (Dooley 79).

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CHAPTER 4

Comparative Analysis and Conclusion

Literary writings usually portray the social and political realities of particular times and places. They bring to fore the implicit beliefs of that society and their implications for different sections and individuals. This analysis of *Half a Life* by V. S. Naipaul and *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai, from the perspective of their treatment of the nation-states and its effects on natives as well as emigrants, shows the different perspectives and ideological positions the two writers, Naipaul and Desai, have towards the issue. The attempt was to analyse both the texts selected for the study to bring put the underlining beliefs and ideologies. The focus was also on understanding the effects political movements and situations have on personal relations.

Kiran Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss* focuses on the Gorkha insurgency, displacement, alienation, class struggles, generation gaps and east-west conflicts. She portrays the miserable plight of Indians at home and in the foreign lands besides Gorkhas' struggle for a particular nation state in the postcolonial India. Naipaul in *Half a Life* deals with the themes of slavery, revolution and guerrilla struggle in India and in an unnamed African country.

Despite V. S. Naipaul and Kiran Desai's differences in age, family background, gender and number of writings, both the novels *Half a Life* and *The Inheritance of Loss* share several common features while depicting the pathos of migrated and displaced people. Both the novels share marked similarity in depicting crisis of identity posed by migration. Biju in *The Inheritance of Loss* and Willie Chandran in *Half a Life* expose the gamut of issues including the multiple exclusion and distribution faced by postcolonial nation-states, threats of migration, loss of identity, globalization, and economic disparity.

Biju migrates from India to New York and the chain of Willie's migrations also begins from India. *Half a Life* is a narrative of migration, identity politics and existential issues of Willie Chandran's life where Willie becomes a symbol for innumerable migrants and their search for identity

which is left in a limbo. Desai's Biju also faces the same humiliation, feels unwanted, alienated and home-sick in the distant land of America.

In this globalized world, capital and information flow freely and give rise to the assertion of regional, local, ethnic and political identities at the local and national levels. Migration and geographical relocation creates cultural, racial, ethnic and religious conflicts. The natives see the immigration as a threat to their livelihood and cultural identity as well as to their control over land and resources. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* explores such issues.

Migration, multiculturalism, cultural encounters, racism are explored fully by Desai. Biju has become Desai's mouthpiece for describing the unavoidable negative impacts of globalization as alienation, rootlessness and loss of identity. Naipaul's Willie and his friend, Jamaican born Percy Cato also become the victims of class struggles prevalent in every part of the world. Both the novels explore the situations of these victims.

The texts produced by western authors seldom do justice to the emotions of the regional people. Likewise the ones written by Indians settled abroad, for example, *Half a Life* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, seem to be an outsider's view and rarely empathise with the people of the land. These texts primarily target the western audience as the westerners are portrayed in positive light and the deficiencies, shortcomings of the natives are highlighted. Kiran Desai's views seem quite unsympathetic in the portrayal of Gorkha's struggle and seem an outsider's view as she terms this movement as redundant one and fictionalizes major turning points of history.

Sometimes Naipaul and Kiran Desai present satirical, unsympathetic and ironic image of the orientals rather than empathising or sharing humaneness. Gyan, Biju, Jemubhai Patel in *The Inheritance of Loss* and Willie, Saeed Saeed, and Harish Harry in *Half a Life* are presented as self-seeking migrants. Moreover, there is pervasive sense of failed state machinery, greed, selfishness and loss of human values. This quest of self-identity sometimes ends up with the loss of their inherited identity.

Naipaul has developed a kind of discourse in which western hegemonic hierarchies dominate the marginalised others. In addition to the

race and class dominance, it is privileged men who dictate the marginalized women. He has presented derogatory image of Willie's mother, and Willie's girlfriends Graca and Carla. Ana is the only exception. But on the other hand, Desai's portrayal of females stands in stark comparison to Naipaul's. Some of her female characters are somewhat traditional, subservient and meek while some others are assertive and independent. Jemubhai Patel's wife Nimi who was named as Bela after her marriage is presented as a traditional Indian woman who is docile and submissive but her daughter who has not been named by Desai is somewhat free to choose her own life. Her daughter, Sai, the third generation woman in Judge's family is neither docile as her grandmother nor negligible like her own mother. Sai is a face of modern woman who is sensitive and naïve but somewhat bold, strong, free and confident. Desai successfully shatters the stereotypical image of Indian woman making her more individual and human.

In the case of economic disparities, multiple hegemonies whether national and international, victimize helpless individuals. The fate of the individuals caught in such political, economic, historical intricacies is of particular interest for these writers especially if they themselves happen to be rootless individuals. The previous studies show that Kiran Desai and V. S. Naipaul represent the migrant diasporic individuals who can survey the socio-cultural political scene around him or her with detachment, irony, humour and sarcasm.

In Desai's fiction, Indians are afflicted with grave poverty. The non-fulfilment of their basic needs results in their anger and resentment against the state-machinery. But this poverty stricken-image is considerably the consequence of the hidden agenda of the developed European nations over the centuries, who want to impose this oriental image over the inhabitants of developing countries. Similarly, like the writer himself in self-exile, Naipaul's protagonist Willie is politically subjugated, socially incapable, without money, stands spartanly vulnerable with complete erasure of his identity.

The collision of different cultures is another vital issue explored in both the novels. The migration of Naipaul's Willie and Desai's Biju shows their vain efforts to adopt the foreign culture and get assimilated in to the

same. Indirectly they put forward that the colonial subjects often fail to create meaning in crumbling postcolonial world around them giving birth to the angst of clashing and fading worlds. Both the texts consistently uphold a belief that the western version of civilization offers people the dignity of an individual and the idea of progress.

The *Inheritance of Loss* is a narrative of loss, Jemubhai Patel's migration and loss of his identity which results in his Anglophile image, Sai and Gyan's loss of their love, Cook's loss of his son, and Biju's loss of his own national identity which turns in to his loss of borrowed identity. Judge's love for bed tea and his pet, Mutt more than even his cook shows his Anglophile image and even more his hope to get assimilated in foreign culture. Gorkhas' struggle for their own nation-state ricochet their search for particular identity on the one hand and on the other the loss of personal relations due to political upheavals. But in case of *Half a Life*, an individual, Willie Chandran has become a mouth-piece for innumerable migrants who are in the continuous process of loss. Willie and his father's irresistible desire for modernity leading to Willie's migration bequeath pain of exile and the anxiety of being a foreigner.

These Anglicized Indians if live at the foreign land feel estranged from the foreign culture and feel equally alienated from the people around them if they come back at their inherited land. In the treatment of Postcolonial confusion, hopelessness and desolation, Kiran Desai comes closer to Naipaul whose protagonist Willie also leads a half-life of exile. The name of Naipaul's protagonist Willie Somerset Chandran and Desai's Anglicized Judge, Jemubhai Popatlal Patel shows the vain efforts of these people to fit themselves in western frames with the change of their names as their hybrid names leave their identities in a limbo.

The prime concern of both the novels is to uncover the miserable conditions of the lives of subaltern people and their continuous struggle and hope of assimilation. Father Booty, Uncle Potty, Noni and Lola's acceptance of western ways and mannerisms of life, at the stake of rejection of their own Indian one, show their deep rooted wish of incorporation. Naipaul's Willie wants to get his stories published in order to

establish himself as a writer. But it is not possible for him to be in the foreign land.

The end of both the novels reveals similar sombre mood which is considered as the hallmark of migration. In the end Desai announces the unfulfilled return of Biju in Kalimpong with a little ray of hope. He returns with the optimism that he will be greeted in India but he faces entirely opposite welcome. He is looted by the robbers of his own community. In the same manner Naipaul proclaims the half and unsuccessful journey of Willie's life. He thinks he is living Ana's life and it is not at all his own life. Naipaul's protagonist announces that he has given up forty two years of his life and he wants to live his own life now.

Both the novelists have employed different narrative techniques as *Half a Life's* narrators change within location and scene. The novel has been divided in three chapters; the first chapter deals with the life of Willie's father who himself is the narrator in this chapter and second chapter describes the first part of Willie Chandran's life. In the third chapter, the narrative shifts from the first person narrative to the third person narrative till the end of the novel. On the other hand, Desai has used third person narrative in her novel.

This study focused only on two authors but many other authors writing in targeting international audiences deal with the predicament of individuals trapped in the conflicts caused by ever-changing nature of nation-state. It is an important area of research as it foregrounds the political, cultural and ideological implications in fiction. Vernacular texts and texts produced by the natives of other nations in English together can be studied to see how location and ideological positioning determine one's views about nation-state.

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