Unwelcoming Homes: Alie*nations* and Dis*locations* in Contemporary South Asian Fiction

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes contemporary South Asian Anglophone fiction that deal with the question of identity, nation, and nationalism in postcolonial and contemporary South Asia. It focuses on how "home" as a material as well as an allegorical concept figures in the discourses on identity, belonging, and nation in South Asia. It examines how post-millennial fiction by South Asian writers—or those of South Asian descent—interrogate the politics, practices and pitfalls of nation-building in South Asia, even as they deal with the contemporary concerns of alie*nation* and dis*location* in the global transnational scale. It argues that there is a need to move beyond the theoretical concepts of diaspora, migration, refugee, partition, or postcolonial studies—even as we use these concepts as starting points—to understand how claims to authenticity, autochthony, nativity, ethnicity, and territoriality have led to the emergence of the "native other." The "native other," it claims, is different from the "other" in various guises including diasporic, migrant, refugee, and subaltern. It is in the interstices of nativity and foreignness, of belonging and dislocation, and of home and homelessness that the figure of the native "other" emerges. What distinguishes the native other from other "others" is its political agency to represent itself, which others usually lack. In five main chapters, it explores how writers such as Kiran Desai, Kamila Shamsie, Tahmima Anam, Manjushree Thapa, and Nayomi Munaweera have represented the "native other" in the context of political changes, homeland conflicts and nation formations in South Asia. By focusing on how "home" or the absence of it plays a central role in experiences of alienation and

dislocation—and by extension, the aspiration of nation and location—of the “native other,” the thesis offers a lens through which to critically examine the problems and pitfalls of nation-building and nationalism in South Asia that have resulted in the creation of unequal and estranged citizens. It also calls for a reconceptualization of the field of postcolonial theory, migration and diaspora studies to incorporate issues of intra-regional and trans-national flows of people within South Asia, inter-generational responses to the questions of nationalism, identity, and belonging.

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

Alie*nations*, Dis*locations*, and Contemporary South Asian Literature

"... you can't go home again. Why? Because you are home ..."

(Garber 60)

While there has been an exponential growth of critical inquiry into the experiences of dislocation, disbelonging, strangeness, and homelessness as inevitable experiences of diaspora and migrant condition, contemporary debates on diaspora and migrancy have focussed excessively on the diaspora and migrant individuals/communities in the metropolitan West. There is a lack of similar interest on the internal migrants or diaspora within what one would could call "home countries." Issues related to migration, diaspora, homelessness, alienation, dislocation, and belonging within sub-regional or sub-national contexts such as in South Asia have received little attention. How do we account for diaspora or migrant narratives that are part of identity formation within South Asia? Issues of home, alienation, and dislocation are as much a part of the experiences of trans-national "diaspora" within South Asia as they are of the South Asian diaspora living in London, New York or Toronto.[1]

1 For much of diaspora and migrant communities, the most defining characteristic is the longing for home, to which they wish to return one day. Yasmin Hussain argues that "the dream of returning to the homeland provides a fundamental principle of the diasporic identity" (7). These writings present home as the entity or the land that is left behind, where the migrant's or the diaspora's extended family lives and where she or he wants to return at one point of time. The present home is not the real home, and the

There are also remarkable differences in the experiences of these two kinds of the South Asian diaspora—those living in the West and those living in South Asia—owing to the differences between South Asia and the West in geographical, economic, political and cultural conditions. The difference is manifest in their categorization itself, in that while individuals of South Asian descent in the West can easily be categorized as South Asian diaspora, the same is not possible in the case of transnational diaspora within South Asia. For instance, internally dislocated communities such as Muhajirs, Indian Nepalis, or Sri Lankan Tamils[2]—are not the same kinds of diaspora as an Indian, a Sri Lankan or a Nepali in the West. While the latter may simply be identified as South Asian diaspora, the former may be identified as perceived or proverbial because of their claims to nativity to the place. These are people whose concerns the contemporary discourses on diaspora and migrancy have not been able to address.

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longing for returning to left-behind real or imaginary homes make remain part of diaspora identity.

2 I use the phrase Sri Lankan Tamils to denote the Tamils mainly from the Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka. A different community of Tamils, living in the central hills around Kandy, is called the Indian Tamils or Up-country Tamils. This research project is mostly focused on the Sri Lankan Tamils, but references, wherever appropriate, will be made about the Indian Tamils as well.

The terms diaspora and migrancy are used here only provisionally—to open a discusion on the issue of the "native other." The concern here is to discuss how discourses of diaspora, migration, nativity and foreignness are created to foster competing ideas of nationalism and belonging, perpetuating "otherness" on certain communities within South Asia. These discourses construct ethnic or cultural communities living in the margins of the nation and, in some cases, in borderlands, as diasporic or migrant "others." The fact that these "others" have longstanding associations with the land and aspire for legitimacy as native citizens, they could be identified as "native others."

What about the Muhajirs who have lived in Pakistan, the perceived Muslim homeland? What about the Tamils who have lived in Sri Lanka for centuries and know no second home? What about the Gorkhas who have never left their imaginary "Gorkhaland" even as the boundaries of nation-states continued to change especially during colonialism, leaving them to grapple with the question of who they are and how they identify with the nation? What about the Bhutanese Lhotshampas who had been discriminated against because of their linguistic differences (they speak Nepali, in contrast with the Drukpas who speak Dzongkha, the national language)? In the Bhutanese case, the country adopted the "one nation, one people" policy (especially in the 1980s) which led to the eviction of over a hundred thousand Nepali-speaking Lhotsampas. Nepal's policy of "one nation, one language, and one religion" was not explicitly aggressive, but implicitly, it was able to keep a large section of the population under cultural coercion in the name of integration. The Lhotshampas, forcibly evacuated from their homes, were bundled in trucks and sent to Nepal through India, the claim being that Nepal was the original homeland of the

Nepali speakers. Similar was the case of the Up-Country Tamils in Sri Lanka, who were repatriated to India in the 1960s and the 1970s by the Sri Lankan government, as they were not provided with the rights to citizenship. The question that immediately arises in view of these cases is how long, or what rites of passage are required for community to become citizens and real inhabitants of a place to call it their home?

The research project thus intends to build a conceptual framework for understanding issues of alienation and dislocation and the making of the "native other" as the legacy of postcolonial nation-building projects in South Asia. In so doing, it deals extensively with the theoretical and philosophical debates on the issues related to home and homeland in relation to self and nation, to understand why the idea of home is so integral to nation-building in South Asia. It addresses the lack of contemporary scholarship on South Asian diaspora studies, migration studies and postcolonial studies by critically engaging with ideas of home, alienation, and dislocation of "native other" as represented in the fictional texts of contemporary South Asian writers, namely Kiran Desai, Kamila Shamsie, Tahmima Anam, Manjushree Thapa, and Nayomi Munaweera. These texts—*The Inheritance of Loss*, *Kartography*, *A Golden Age*, *Seasons of Flight*, and *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*—respectively, invoke homeland-based political assertions or insurrections as manifestations of how a "native other" claims his/her stake in the nation. Each of these texts deals with internal displacements and explores how the "native other" challenges the integrity of the nation-state in South Asia. The novels being discussed in this study are those which deviate from the typical narratives of east-west migration and diaspora lives, and explore how the narrative construction of diasporas within South Asia

has resulted in the formation of alienated and dislocated identities, or “internal diasporas” within South Asia. Ideas of home, homeland, nativity, citizenship, ethnicity, and language are some of the angles to look at the experiences of dislocation and estrangement among South Asian individuals and communities who, in their own homeland, live as marginal figures in the interstices of “home” and “outside,” “native” and “foreigner,” “us” and “other.” Keeping these binaries in mind, this research project will devise a theoretical framework for understanding issues of alienation and dislocation, and also *nation* and *location* as the emphasis in the title suggests, of native “other” in South Asia.

The research project will firstly delineate the contemporary theoretical postulations on the main themes reflected in the title of this thesis—home, alienation, and location, by shedding light on how we understand the “native other”’s condition of being “unhomed,” alienated and dislocated at home or in the homeland. Secondly, it will examine the possibility of reconceptualization of the concepts of nation, identity, and citizenship that could offer possible ways of “re-homing,” “de-alienating” and “locating” the other. The objective of this research project is not only to discuss concerns of home and homelessness but also to explore a hermeneutic possibility of co-belonging that would prepare the groundwork for “re-homing” the “unhomed.”

The thesis is divided into five main chapters, bookended by this introductory chapter a conclusion. It entails a detailed discussion of the theoretical paradigms of diaspora studies, postcolonial studies, transnationalism and nationalism *vis-a-vis* the concepts of home, location, identity, and nation so as to formulate a theoretical paradigm for

analyzing contemporary South Asian fictional texts. Although this research project is not particularly concerned with the multi-state conglomeration of SAARC, the order of the chapters is still based on the demographic strength of the chosen South Asian countries. This is done for the sake of methodological clarity, and by no means is it intended towards creating a hierarchy or indicate political hegemony of any nation-state. This research project lacks substantial discussion of texts written in languages other than English; that would warrant another full-fledged research project altogether. Each chapter of the thesis work will thus interrogate the question of the nation through deliberations on home as represented by fictional texts from South Asia. Each chapter begins with an analysis of the historical and political contexts in which the novels have been based, to explore how the exclusivist politics of postcolonial nationalism resulted in the perpetuation of otherness and estrangement among citizens of the subcontinent. While each chapter focuses on a novel each from the South Asian countries chosen, they will also deal extensively with other contemporary texts from respective countries.

The introductory first chapter delineates contemporary debates on notions of home, alienation, and dislocation vis-a-vis theories of migration, diaspora, nationalism and postcolonial theory. It also examines the contemporary South Asian literary field, focusing on how the idea of a South Asian literature is emerging from within South Asia, with the growth of publishing opportunities in the region. It delves into how South Asian nation-states—though not all of them have the same historical background—went through the processes of nation-building in the postcolonial phase, and emerged with various consequences—of consolidation as well as disintegration. It shows how claims to home

vis-a-vis the concept of regions and nations, and the perpetuation of differences based on belonging, nativity, foreignness, and autochthony have remained at the core of competitive nationalisms in South Asia, and how the figure of the native "other" emerged in the process.

The second chapter, titled "Politics of Dislocation and Mutual "Othering": Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss" seeks to critically examine Desai's depiction of belonging, alienation, and dislocation among the Nepali-speaking Gorkha community in the Eastern Himalayan districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. It interrogates whether it is possible to think beyond state-sanctioned concepts of belonging in terms of citizenship, to a more wider concept based humanity, compassion and cultural exchange, which would ultimately lead us to conceive of an idea of peaceful living together.

The third chapter, titled "Homeland's Diasporas and Allegorical Cartography: Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography*"addresses the questions of location and identity formation in Pakistan, particularly in the context of the Muhajir Qaumi Movement that arose as a virulent uprising of the Muhajirs in their quest for identity. It discusses Kamila Shamsie's novel *Kartography* to explore the liminality of nativity and foreignness of Pakistani Muhajirs who migrated to Pakistan, the promised Muslim homeland, after the partition of India. It elaborates on ideas of home and belonging, and also engages with the discourse of the discipline of cartography as a practice in place-making and assertion of ownership of the place. Additionally, it explores the questions of justice and memory as issues that are important factors affecting the lives of individuals at present—in the case of the novel,

the question of where they stood in history vis-a-vis the independence movement in East Pakistan in 1971 and the response by the Pakistani state.

The fourth chapter, titled "Golden Bungalow, "*Shonar Bangla*": Tahmima Anam's *A Golden Age,"* discusses Tahmima Anam's novel *A Golden Age* to explore the concept of linguistic and ethnic otherness leads to the failure of the state to bind its citizens within the imaginary boundaries of the nation, thus leading to the demand of citizens for a separate homeland. Rather than focusing solely on the event of 1971, this chapter examines how Anam's narrativization focuses on individual quests of belonging and home making.

The fifth chapter, titled "Home is Nowhere: Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*," discusses Manjushree Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight* in the light of alienation felt by the citizens of Nepal as the country attempted to carve out a national identity in the postcolonial context of South Asia. This chapter also entails a broader examination of the historical development of Nepali nationalism under the aegis of the Nepalese monarchy, and the way citizens of Nepal have negotiated their terms of engagement with the nation.

The sixth chapter, titled "Eelam and its Illusions: Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*," discusses how Munaweera explores the cultural and ethnic dislocation of Tamils in Sri Lanka in the wake of the LTTE liberation war in a country that openly favored one language or religion over another. The chapter also

examines how the author explores the ethics of alterity as a way of fostering a sense of solidarity among communities and individuals as a way of getting over the past and imagining a common future.

This thesis concludes with an attempt to understand if there is a South Asian way of understanding the concepts of home and dislocation and whether these fictional texts provide a lead to formulating a theoretical concept for peaceful cohabitation of different identity groups within the imaginaries of the nation in South Asia. One of the interests of the thesis will also be to see what ideas these novels present in terms of accommodating otherness, overcoming differences, and imagining affirmative ideas about living together in spite of racial/cultural/linguistic/national differences. These texts show how individuals attempt to reconstruct their identities in the new home when their legitimacy is constantly challenged by native communities or the state functions. Moreover, these texts reject the idea of a homogenized nation in terms of ethnicity or caste or religion and open up the possibility of imagining a nation in terms of diversity and plurality.

I have focused on the work these writers because of certain similarities in their personal histories, apart from the similarities in the nature of their literary works. They are contemporaries in several ways: they all claim the respective countries in South Asia either as their primary homes or descent, although they have lived a substantial part of their lives as diaspora in the West; historically located in the post-partition, postmodern, postcolonial age; write primarily in English, although the choice of Anglophone writings is not in any way to show their importance but my own lack of knowledge of many

different literary writings in regional languages; and are all women, although this research project does not dwell upon the gender factor substantially. Kamila Shamsie was born in Karachi, Pakistan and later moved to London, where she took up a British citizenship. A substantial part of her writing has focused on Pakistan, especially Karachi. She now divides her time between London and Karachi. Kiran Desai was born and raised in India and now lives in the USA. Both these writers come from exemplary literary households—Kamila is the daughter of Muneeza Shamsie, Pakistan's foremost writer and literary critic, and grand-niece of Atiya Hossain, undivided India's major Urdu writer who chose to live in a third country as she found it too difficult to choose her "home" between Indian and Pakistan in the immediate aftermath of the Partition. Kiran is the daughter of Anita Desai, one of the most accomplished among Indian writers writing in English. Tahmima Anam was born in Bangladesh and moved to London, and now holds a British citizenship. Nayomi Munaweera was born in Sri Lanka, raised in Nigeria, and moved to America where she now lives with frequent travels to Sri Lanka. Almost all the authors of these fictional texts stay in the metropolitan centers of the West, or divide their time between the West and the East, and claim one of the South Asian countries as their home or homeland. These writers are thus cosmopolitan, mobile individuals while the characters they depict in their novels are not as mobile. So, one of the objectives of this research project is also to understand the tension between the trapped, immobile characters the writers depict in their novels, and the dynamic status of the writers themselves, to examine how physical mobility and fluidity of identity determines an individual's claims and belonging, and also acceptance, to a place. The writers chosen for this study are cosmopolitan individuals belonging to multiple locations at the same time, straddling

between the West and the East, facilitated by the ease of transportation, technology, and globalization. These writers are seen shifting locations frequently. While diaspora writings concern mostly with reminiscences and romanticization of past homes, what the concern of the native "other" is to get rid of their pasts and live in the present, and assert their claims of "home" at the very place where they are living in at present.

These South Asian novels have been selected for analysis because they share a number of similar themes and concerns. Thematically, these novels deal with concerns of home, belonging, alienation and dislocation within South Asia, and all of them are written in the 21st century. A common theme that threads all these texts together is the theme violence emerging out of ethnonational/ethnoterritorial movements. They are concerned with the issues of location, nation, and migration, which are the three fundamental concerns of postcolonial theory. The novels in question point out the limits of the idea of a homogenized, unitary nation envisaged by a certain majority or so-called native populations. They have explicitly taken on the issues of othering, loss, and claims to belonging, and autochthonic claims. These novels taken for this research project do not make an exhaustive list—there is a significant repertoire of literary productions from South Asia that raise these and similar issues—but these writings indicate a general tendency and are representative novels.

At the backdrop of these novels are various insurgent or resistance movements in postcolonial South Asia. Most South Asian countries have all faced insurgent conflicts in the recent past—the Muhajir Qaumi Movement in Pakistan, the Gorkhaland Movement in

India, the Tamil Movement in Sri Lanka, the Maoist Movement in Nepal, and the Bengali Liberation Movementt in Pakistan/Bangladesh. These ethnonational/ethnoterritorial movements make the backdrop for the novels taken up in the research project. Even as this research project focuses on a theoretical understanding of the conception of home among native "others," it automatically touches upon the idea of nation formation in South Asia. They deal with the failures of South Asian states to keep their initial promises of equity, equality, and citizenship, and all these novels deal with individuals, families, and citizens caught up in the double bind of political and personal dislocation. These texts narrativize the politics of identity, belonging and citizenship as it unfolded in the process of nation-making and identity formation in postcolonial South Asia.

The following section adumbrates a conceptual framework for a study of the alie*nations* and dis*locations* of the South Asian "native other." It begins with an exploration of what South Asia means in a regionalist perspective and how the idea of a "South Asian regionalism" helps understand the precariousness of the "native other." It goes on to discuss a possible aesthetic of contemporary South Asian Anglophone literature. It then discusses in detail how the category of the "native other" emerges out of postcolonial politics of nation and national identity formation and how postcolonial theory has been insufficient in dealing with this issue. Finally, it delineates a theoretical conceptualization of the South Asian "native other" by discussing different caveats of home and homelessness.

South Asia: a regionalist perspective

The *Himal Southasian* magazine has published an upside-down map of South Asia—the magazine calls it "The Right-Side-Up Map"—a unique map of South Asia that shows the region from what would generally be called an upside-down perspective for those familiar with the widely available map of South Asia. Sri Lanka, which appears at the bottom in usual maps appears the top in the *Himal* map. Similarly, Nepal, which appears at the top in usual maps appears in the *Himal* map at the bottom. *Himal*'s playful rendition—or rather redrawing of the South Asian map—went largely unnoticed except for a small circle of *Himal* after it was first publicized in 1998 until February 2017, when the display of the same created a controversy involving Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad cadres and Nivedita Menon, a professor of International Relations at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Menon was criticized, and a police complaint filed against her on the charge of "anti-national activity" for, among other things, displaying a map of India upside down (Menon 2017; *Financial Express Online* 2017).[3] What does this seemingly unusual representation of the South Asian region imply? Is it a serious threat to geopolitical formations and nation-states in South Asia? Does South Asia continue to be what it is even when it is seen the other way round? The map, at best, undercuts the dominant narrative of nations as monolithic, static and sacred components of geographical and cultural markers that cannot be changed. But the question that still remains, apart from cartographic representation is: What is it that constitutes South Asia? Is it geographical territory, nation-states, or shared pasts marked by cross-cultural encounters and divides? What is it that constitutes South Asia? Is it geographical territory, nation-states, or shared

3 Other charges against her include her views on Kashmir and her comment on Indian soldiers working for livelihood and not for the nation.

history of loss, inheritance, and belonging?

Although South Asia connotes a certain geographical region, it cannot be talked about in terms of a singular entity, which is what makes this topic unique and challenging. So the most viable way of looking at issues like this is to think of South Asia as a trans-local space where identities are fluid, but then they are very strict. We may have a shared past, but our ways are very different. But there is also the shared present among South Asians. India-Pakistan and India-Nepal are most potent examples of the geopolitical proximity and rivalry between nations in South Asia. How do we deal with such vast and complex issues? One of the things that this research project proposes to do is to bring out such complexities without straitjacketing the vast differences in a singular theory. South Asia has historically experienced so many border changes and political formations that it is sometimes difficult to talk about peoples and identities in terms of fixed notions of national identity. Cultural and linguistic similarities bleed into each other to form transnational/trans-local connections, and histories intersect so much so that it is difficult to talk about the history of one country without referring to that of another.

South Asia is therefore not defined in terms of cartographic divisions but in terms of cultural translations, political connections, and economic transactions. In this sense, the *Himal Southasia* magazine's combining of the terms "South" and "Asia" together to denote "Southasian regionalism" rather than a conglomeration of nation-states seems pertinent. It is, therefore, useful to think of South Asia in terms of *Himal Southasia*'s regional perspective, which shows why it is important to look at the region from a new

perspective. According to the editors of *Himal*, South Asians are forced to “wear” primary identities of nation-states despite the layer of identities that define the historical legacy of all of South Asia. Such “exclusive identity formation...leads towards radical populism, put politicians on the defensive and energizes demagogues” ("The Right-Side-Up Map"). *Himal*’s South Asian map, as seen in the up-side-down map, designed by Nepalese artist Subhas Rai, is apt in foregrounding the idea that while nation-states are an important factor in South Asian identity, local, regional and trans-local interactions are equally important to view the region from a different perspective.

South Asia is not to be conflated with SAARC, although there are several overlaps. The present thesis, while using texts that are produced from, or representing, certain nation-states in the SAARC region, will focus on the idea of South Asia rather than the political geography of SAARC. South Asia is used as a generic term used to understand the eight SAARC nations. So, in discussions on South Asia, it is not unusual to discuss countries such as Burma and exclude Maldives because of cultural and geographical proximity and distance respectively. While the South Asian sub-continental politics is often rife with border conflicts, both fluid as well as open ones, the region is characterized by trans-local connections between several locations across nation-states, with several communities having historical and cultural links across the national borders. These trans-local connections inform the inevitability of communication as well as contestation outside of the purview of national borders within South Asia. Translocal connections are vital connections that define the very formation of various communities in South Asia and are, in effect, the drivers of conflict between communities or between a community and the

state. When we talk of the trans-local as something that connects local with local, in the context of ethnonational politics, the relationship between a local with another local is not necessarily of connectedness but of disconnectedness as well.

South Asian English literature

Is there a South Asian literary aesthetic? Or is there a South Asian literary aesthetics in English? What could such aesthetic if it exists, be? It is difficult to talk about what South Asian literature is, or what are the many characteristics that define South Asian literature. English writing has not yet caught up with the kind of experimentation in terms of the use of language and form that regional language literature from South Asia has done. English language literature itself is at a nascent phase in South Asia, but it is increasingly becoming evident that English is a common literary language of South Asia. The growth in quality and quantity of writings published in English from within South Asia itself points to the expanding horizon of South Asian literature. This is also to be gauged by the number of publishing houses in New Delhi that cater to the English language readership of the whole of South Asia. New Delhi is increasingly becoming the center of publishing not only of India but of South Asia. Most of the major English writers of South Asia have been published or republished from publishing houses in New Delhi. The growth of commercial English publishing in India and its commercial interests all over South Asia has contributed to the growth of English literature from South Asia, albeit with New Delhi as the center of such growth. New Delhi is, therefore, the center of publishing activity in South Asia. Even the South Asian writers published in the West are republished by imprints of global publishing houses based in New Delhi. English writers from India,

Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have been more productive, and relatively more well known in the West as well as in South Asia itself, compared to the relative newcomers from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan, where English writing is in the nascent phase. However, the newcomers, just as the established ones, have strong traditions of writing in their regional and "national" languages. There is, for instance, a "robust and thriving literary culture in Bangladesh which revolves entirely around the Bangla language ... There is no way that English could overshadow Bangla" (Tahmima Anam, "An Interview" 45). The discourse on whether to write in Bangla or English has remained a highly political issue in Bangladesh, perhaps the only country whose independence was spurred by a language movement (Akbar and Ahmed, "Editorial." According to Ashan and Ahmed, writing in English could be considered a form of disloyalty [to the nation] but Bangladesh is slowly warming up to and nurturing English writing without anxiety, "a testament to the new-born country's growing cultural confidence" (1).

Even as English writings from South Asia make their presence stronger, there are challenges in terms of whether they are to be classified under national literature or considered South Asian. Whereas writers of Indian, Pakistani or Sri Lankan backgrounds are generally identified with "South Asian" writers in the West, they come with their baggage of national identity within South Asia. South Asian English literature has remained nation-state centric, since the time of the Partition itself. The fact that many South Asian English writers of the pre-independence generation are shared and claimed by different national literatures shows that there could still be a space for a South Asian sensibility. However, the first challenge is that there could be no consensus on what is a

South Asian sensibility and what kind of writing makes for South Asian literature. South Asian literature as a literary and aesthetic category could, therefore, be complete when it is talked about in sum of its parts. The question that arises then is this: Is South Asian literature a sum of literatures from different nations within South Asia? Its answer could only be a hesitant "yes." The difficulty of talking about South Asian literature as a conglomeration of national literatures from South Asia arises from the fact that there is no "national literature" as such in South Asia.

As Tahmima Anam rightly says, it is difficult to characterize a "national' literature" ("An Interview" 44). Whereas in the case of Bangla, there is a widespread trans-local connection between West Bengal and Bangladesh, whereby Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore is the songwriter of Bangladesh's national anthem (so with the Indian national anthem). The Bangladeshi national poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, is also a Bengali, who was invited to Dhaka as a doyen of Bengali literary culture, who would help embolden Bengali nationalism and, as Ella Weisser writes, was probably held back "because the Bangladeshi government wanted to stake its claim on him." Rashid Askari argues that although what is now called Bangladeshi writing in English came into being after the emergence of Bangladesh, the legacy of Bangladeshi writing should be traced back to pre-independence undivided Bengal ("Bangladeshis Writing in English"). Naturally, the question of to what extent can Indian writers of the pre-1947 era could be shared and claimed other South Asian cultures is debatable and seemingly difficult to settle. South Asian writing in English has English has come a long way since the first publication of Kashi Prasad Ghosh's *Shair and Other Poems* (1830), considered the earliest South Asian

attempt at writing poetry in English (Kachru, 2005: 58). Ghosh is generally considered the first Indian author to have published in English, although Henry L.V. Derozio wrote poetry earlier than Ghosh, but was not published in book form during his lifetime. In English fiction, too, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) is considered the first English novel of the region. Askari goes right back to the pioneering generation Bengali writers who wrote in English, such as Kashiprashad Ghose, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, and Bankimchandra Chatterjee as belonging to the tradition of Bengali English writing. The demarcation of national borders and national identity have certainly helped differentiate between the older generation of writers in the undivided subcontinent and those of the present, Askari is convincing in arguing that Indian Bengal and Bangladesh share the same literary heritage.

The sharing of literary cultures and writers is one of the characteristics that define South Asia, where languages permeate national borders: Nepali language literature written by Indian writers in the Eastern Himalayas has found little space in India, whereas these very writers are canonized as major writers in Nepal. Examples include Indra Bahadur Rai, Parijat, and Lil Bahadur Chhetri. Maithili as a literary culture dates back to centuries in South Asia, much before nation-states and national identities came into existence. Vidyapati is a common poet laureate of Maithili speakers in either side of the Mithila area in India and Nepal. Similarly, Bhanubhakta is the poet laureate of Nepali speakers in both India and Nepal. Bhanubhakta's popularity and authority as the common poet of all Nepali speakers everywhere in the world have been questioned time and again, such as in the case of destruction of Bhanubhakta's statue during the Gorkhaland movement in the

late eighties in Darjeeling,[4] and also in Janakpurdham during the 2007 Madhesh movement in Nepal. Such attempts at breaking away from are spurred by different identity groups trying to find out an identity and cultural icon of their own in their narrow definitions of cultural identity.

An interesting paradox about South Asian writers living mostly in the West or dividing their time between "homelands" and the West is that when they writers are often critics of the postcolonial condition, they are also beneficiaries of the wide reach of global capitalism that allows their books to be marketed in various parts of the world while the publishing industries in the UK or the USA remaining at the centre. Gita Rajan and Shailja Sharma have echoed this in their edited volume, *New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the U.S*, arguing that "Their stories of migration, of identities in flux, subjects facing crisis situations and trauma, represents a contemporary phase in globalization" (156). Rajan and Sharma further argue,

> Recent fiction by South Asians presents a different form of writing that borrows from local and global themes and vocabularies ... they explore contemporary realities of shifting national boundaries, multiple locations of home, multiracial and multicultural identities by deftly yoking together the local with the global. (151)

In an interview with Maggi Gee, Kiran Desai accepts the act of writing as a cathartic experience where "you explore the dichotomy of having dual identities, of this journey of going to different countries and still maintaining who you are" (Gee 36). Desai says,

4 This episode is elabloreated in Chapter I in the discussion on Indian Nepalis.

> It's very wonderful to be a novelist while also being an immigrant, while also being someone who travels, because your sense of identity is endlessly complicated and you begin to wonder if it's really a firm thing at all. It seems to get further and further undone, as does any notion of home or any idea of a centre in the past, which is a home, I guess—the past is a home for all of us in one way or another. (Gee 36)

Desai, like other writers taken up in this study, "expand[s] the generic boundaries" (Sabo 375) of South Asian writing in English. In this way, Desai joins the group of other global contemporary writers writing on issues of migration from a viewpoint that presents dislocation and alienation. In the words of Pankaj Mishra,

> Desai seems far from writers like Zadie Smith and Hari Kunzru, whose fiction takes a generally optimistic view of what Salman Rushdie has called "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. (Mishra, "Wounded by the West")

Writing about Desai's representation of the postcolonial migratory condition, Oana Sabo writes that "In blending aesthetic and material concerns, Desai departs from theories of diaspora and cosmopolitanism that tend to privilege hybridity and mobility" (Sabo 375). In a similar vein, John Masterson has argued that writings of contemporary diaspora writers living in the West, such as Kiran Desai, referred to as "midnight's grandchildren," (418) as well as other migrant writers such as Junot Diaz and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "can be seen as having a salutary, because "re-grounding," effect, offering, in different ways, more refined visions of travel and/as travail (Masterson 411). These are

cosmopolitan writers who have more or less unbridled access to the West as well as to their homeland but have written about those who face the stigma of migrancy without so much as setting foot out of their land for decades. These are writers starting their career at the turn of the millennium or beyond, and are second or even third generation writers after independence, and may be symbolically called “midnight’s grand-children.” The writings of the postmillennial writers depict a South Asia that is trying to come to terms with the transitional phase between the postcolonial and the postmillennial condition. Even as these writers address the fault lines of postcolonial nation formations and contemporary political configurations South Asia, they are also questioning, through their writings, the previous generation that built grand narratives of nations in South Asia, which have had various positive as well as negative repercussions in the present age. According to Boehmer, “Whereas early post-independence writers tended to identify with nationalist causes...in the 1980s and early 1990s, many writers “geographic and cultural affiliations have become more divided and uncertain … cosmopolitan rootlessness “has gone global"” (232). Similarly, unlike the writers of post-independence South Asia, for whom migrancy was “regenerative,” the post-millennial writers have written of the migrant condition as also a potentially alienating experience. The personal histories of these writers—of themselves being located in the West even as they claim South Asian countries as their primary homes—seem to have affected their work, albeit in varying degrees. Their writings reflect the experiences of the South Asian diaspora in the West—although the primary goal of this research project is to critically appraise their representations of home and belonging *within* South Asia.

Postcolonial South Asia and the limits of postcolonial theory

In a fairly recent essay, Robert JC Young has argued about the continued relevance of postcolonial theory as a lens through which we could see the events unfolding in the global age. Young calls for a reconsideration of the role of the postcolonial in the twenty-first century, focusing on what he calls the "politics of invisibility and of unreadability: indigenous struggles and their relation to settler colonialism, illegal migrants, and political Islam" ("Postcolonial Remains" 23). Writing for the journal *New Literary History* in 2012—well before the vote to Brexit and the election of Trump but still relevant in the transnational migrations, global rise of Islamophobia after 9/11—Young argues that such issues call for the attention of postcolonial theory although these do not fall under the rubric of anti-colonial struggles, because they involve, and show the extent to which, postcolonial remains, and also show the historical trajectory and resources for critiques and transformations of the present (22). According to Robert JC Young, the original impulse of postcolonialism was

> to make visible areas, nations, cultures of the world which were notionally acknowledged, technically there, but which in significant other senses were not there, rather like the large letters on the map that Jacques Lacan characterizes as the structure of the unconscious...the politics of invisibility involves not actual invisibility, but a refusal of those in power to see who or what is there. The task of the postcolonial is to make the invisible, in this sense, visible. (23)

While Young's assertion about the continued relevance of postcolonial theory to understand the contemporary concerns of migration, diaspora, and importantly his idea of

the “tricontinental subaltern” sounds convincing, it is pertinent to examine what has been left unfulfilled in the discussion within postcolonial societies in the immediate aftermath of independence. Young further argues that postcolonial theory could provide a theoretical framework for understanding new phenomena such as globalization and migration, and the question of emancipation—not for the colonized, as that part is already over—but for

> those countless individuals in so many societies, who are surplus to economic requirements, redundant, remaindered, condemned to the surplusage of lives full of holes, waiting for a future that may never come … The postcolonial question now is how to make the dream of emancipation accessible for all those people who fall outside the needs of contemporary modernity. (27)

Contemporary political developments in the West has many scholars and theorists scrambling to explain why the western democracies are increasingly moving towards right wing nationalist politics, with instances of restriction of travelers and migrants. In literary theory, especially, the kind of theorists such as Homi Bhabha, who have made a career in postcolonial theory explaining the virtues of “hybridity” and “translatability” have been faced with new challenges as contemporary developments in the West have once again brought to the fore the issues of nationalism, secularism, and migrancy. The kind of cultural translation and hybridity celebrated by scholars such as Bhabha have now come under question with the resurgence of right wing nationalism and the sudden challenges faced by transnational migrants in the west as well as those who straddle the linguistic and national borders between the west and the rest. It seems pertinent, then, to deliberate on whether theories such as postcolonialism and transnationalism which have

dealt with these issues to a large extent. It turns out that theories such as postcolonial theory had not prepared sufficient grounds for questions such as what happens to the migrant or diaspora in the west once s/he is suddenly reminded of his/her roots and forcibly asked to return to homelands? For most of the post-1980s decades, issues related to migration, such as diaspora, hybridity, identity, home and belonging have been used in discussions in postcolonial studies so frequently that those concepts have been considered the prerogative of the postcolonial theory itself. Andrew Smith rightly points out the fault line of such discussions when he asserts that migrancy is a central trope within postcolonial studies, but then, “the primary and overriding concern of this field has been with those works which straddle the borders between the colonized and colonizing nations (244). Diaspora narratives have presented the idea of return as a romantic journey back to the homeland, a kind of vacation or the quest to return to roots. This is one aspect at the global level, where the supposed opening up of a global world of the free flow of capital and humans and the rise of cosmopolitan identity do not seem to be what was generally presumed.

While Young considers the continued relevance of postcolonial theory, detractors of the theory have long held the view that postcolonial theory has not dealt sufficiently with the issues in the postcolony itself. One of the major criticisms of postcolonial theory is that is that it is expressed from the subject perspective of third world migrant intellectuals in the West and that it gives undue importance to postcolonial migrants to the west. The criticism against postcolonial theorists such as Spivak and Bhabha is that their major

concern is the Metropolitan intellectual in the western academy and with postcolonial migration and cultural displacement.

This is the charge labeled on postcolonial theorists such as Bhabha early on by Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik. It is worth recalling what Arif Dirlik has written in response to Ella Sohat's query about when exactly the post-colonial began. Dirlik, proposing to "misread" the question deliberately, answers that it began "When Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe" (15). The fundamental question to ask is this: did postcolonial theory really concern itself about the postcolonial condition in former colonies itself? If the postcolonial theory was a critical response to the cultural and political influence of the colonialism in the colony, isn't it necessary for it to address the concerns that arose after decolonization? What happened when the colonizer left? According to Aijaz Ahmad, one of the early detractors of the postcolonial theory, there is a "considerable gap" between postcoloniality in former colonies and postcoloniality as the condition discourse practiced by critics such as Bhabha (283). Ahmad lays out three main themes in the writings of such theorists:

> (a) the theme of "hybridity," "ambivalence" and "contingency," especially in Bhabha's writing but also much beyond; (b) the theme of the collapse of the nation-state as a horizon of politics; and (c) the theme of globalised, postmodern electronic culture, which is seen at times as a form of global entrapment and at other times as yielding the very pleasures of global hybridity. (284)

The postcolonial discourse, thus, turned out to be a critical discourse that found itself disconnected from the real concerns of the colonial context and post-independence realities of the former colonies (Acheraïou 108). Agreeing with Ahmad, Amar Acheraïou further writes,

> migrant postcolonial practitioners promote a diaspora-centric narrative of culture and identity that appears to function as a metonymy for the global postcolonial condition. In a sense, this minor narrative of diasporic identification turns out to be hegemonic and totalizing. Rather than being conceived mainly as one entity within a larger global postcolonial condition, the diaspora has simply become the part that stands for the whole, that is, the former colonial societies. (108)

According to Acheraïou, postcolonial theorists "tend to frame a new centre-periphery binary by privileging diaspora-centric narratives of culture and identity" rather than collapsing the binarism (108-9). Acheraïou further adds that "Within this new configuration of postcolonial relationships the diaspora narratives, whose locus of enunciation is located in Western academic or elite circles, occupy the center, whereas the narratives of the former colonies are either silenced or marginalized" (109). So, on the one hand, Young claims that the present global crises including the translational flows of economic migrants and refugee, and also the growth of right wing and Islamic fundamentalism could be studied under postcolonial theory; on the other, Ahmad and Acherïou claim that postcolonial theory has not finished the primary task of dealing with the concerns of the postcolony itself.

For Ahmad and Dirlik, postcolonial theorists and intellectuals have not only overlooked the material geopolitical conditions of former colonies but also exploited to their benefit the fact of their hybridity to project an image of themselves as both victims and beneficiaries of colonialism at the same time, and that they lack real engagement with postcoloniality of the former colonies (Ahmad 196; Dirlik 74)). Writing from an Indian perspective, Makarand Paranjape has declared the postcolonial as an "omnibus and unwieldy category, which on closer examination, becomes almost meaningless" ("Coping with Post-colonialism" 44). He argues that postcolonialism, which speaks to the West and has marketability in the West, does not take into consideration the lives and experiences of those from the postcolony. He writes, "Given the unequal relationship with the West, the larger part of our lives, experiences, and subjectivities will always remain outside postcolonial discourse" ("Coping" 46). So, we have two strands of thoughts on whether postcolonial theory has fulfilled its promise: on the one hand, the view of critics who claim that it did not sufficiently deal with the issues of the postcolony; and on the other, the one that it is still relevant to interpret and understand the continuing legacy of colonialism and its new avatars in the twenty-first century.

What, then, explains, for instance, the many insurrections and the struggles for recognition of identity and homeland in postcolonial South Asia? In the south Asian context, the dissatisfaction of being excluded from the dominant narratives of the nation has been articulated in the form of demand for a separate homeland for themselves, which is reflected in the different struggles for homeland all over South Asia. Is it possible to understand the emergence of homeland politics in South Asia in the second half of the

twentieth century as a reflection of failures of newly independent nations to accommodate and accomplish the aspirations of the people? It is important to take note of the major problems of nation building in postcolonial South Asia.

Postcolonial Nationalism and the politics of otherness

"National citizenship" is a principle category which regulates modern nation-state system (Benhabib 1). The very fact of nation-making is based on the inclusion of some as members and exclusion of some others as outsiders. One of the most important aspects common to different forms of dispossession is the question of belonging vis-a-vis the state. Meenakshi Mukherjee has pointed out in her article "The Anxiety of Indianness," that "any project of constructing a national identity is predicated upon two simultaneous imperatives: an erasure of difference within the border and accentuating the difference with what lies outside" (174). But what happens when the imagination of the nation is based on the accentuation of the difference with those who are already within the state? This is the problem that lies at the heart of this research project. How does the state produce, through juridical and discursive practices, different *categories* of people? Whether it is the stateless, the refugee or the diaspora, it is the state which has more or less active role in producing these categories of people. In her conversation with Gayatri Spivak, recorded in the book *Who Sings the Nation State?* Judith Butler charts out different forms of dispossession to which the state subjects its people, thereby creating different categories. The state, Butler writes, can signify the source of non-belonging, even produce that non-belonging as a quasi-permanent state...[i]f the state is what "binds," it is also clearly what can and does unbind. And if the state binds in the name of

the nation, conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes (4-5). Butler further explains how stateless are produced through the imposition of certain qualifications upon them, in a similar way as when certain qualifications create citizens or peoples. According to her,

> the stateless are not just stripped of status but accorded a status and prepared for their dispossession and displacement; they become stateless precisely through complying with certain normative categories. As such, they are *produced* as the stateless at the same time that they are jettisoned from juridical modes of belonging...In different ways, they are, significantly, contained within the polis as its interiorized outside. (15-16)

German philosopher Hannah Arendt uses the term “national minorities” for the stateless individuals expelled by the nation-state. For Arendt, as explained by Butler in her book, the formation of the nation-state is bound up “with the recurrent expulsion of national minorities... The state derives its legitimacy from the nation, which means that those national minorities who do not qualify for “national belonging” are regarded as “illegitimate” inhabitants” (30-31).

The question, then, is: has nationalism always been a bad concept? Doesn’t it have any constructive role to play? Has it not served any purpose other than creating binaries of native and alien, or insider and outsider? Frantz Fanon argues that the whereas nationalism plays a critical and progressive role in mobilizing and orchestrating popular resistance to colonialism, it becomes a barrier to progress in the aftermath of decolonization. It rather becomes a barrier to progress, as it becomes a tool for the newly

ascendant political elite to divert attention from their failure to transform the "independent" nation, which therefore assumes the aspect of a "neo-colony" " (*The Wretched of the Earth* 203, qtd in Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* 67-68). For Fanon, whereas anti-colonial nationalism is the "engine of collective daring, ingenuity, and capacious social imagination" and a "magnificent song," the same national consciousness becomes a barrier or progress after decolonization. As early as the late 1950s, Fanon, in his essay "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" warns of the dangers of nationalist ideology being invoked by the national bourgeoisie in Africa at the time, saying that it could crumble into regionalism, tribalism and religious splits (203). The radical transformation or restructuring of the colonial institutions in postcolonial African countries as anticipated by Fanon does not seem to have happened in South Asia either. As warned by Fanon, a section of the former natives became a bourgeoisie class in the new postcolonial states. The bourgeoisie's claim to power based on the creation of false binaries of native versus foreigner, among other binaries of the "us" and the "other."

To find the roots of displacement, dislocation, and alienation in South Asia, it is pertinent to briefly discuss how the politics of nationalism played out in postcolonial South Asia. Nationalism played a vital role in destabilizing the empire, but the "principle of autonomous ethnic or cultural homogeneity...tended to disallow heterogeneity, seeing them as a problem to be resolved or eliminated" (Young, "Postcolonial Remains" 31). As a result of such homogenizing concepts of the nation, postcolonial nations in places such as South Asia could not deliver the promises of equitable distribution of resources, justice and a sense of belonging, for the control of political power by the national elites left large

sections of the population disenchanted. The growth of nationalism in postcolonial South Asia was centered on the idea of “otherness,” “estrangement,” “alienation” and “dislocation” of citizens within the state. The disposable “other” against whom postcolonial peoples could present themselves as “authentic” citizens was the individual or the group who had either migrated recently from within the South Asian region during huge population shifts in the aftermath of the partition, or they may just be proverbial migrants or those with trans-local connection with communities across the border. Whereas Pakistan and Sri Lanka adopted the idea of a homogenizing nation, India, on the other hand, was founded on secular principles. Pakistan and Sri Lanka began introducing the hegemony of one language and religion over its people; even a country like Nepal, which was not formally colonized, hence not a “postcolonial” country in the strict sense of the term, began to impose homogeneous identity, with emphasis on the Khas Nepali language and Hindu religion over its people in the 1960s after King Mahendra took over absolute power. According to Tamara Sivanandan,

> In nation after nation, the elites moved, as they too over the state structures (structures which, significantly, predated nationalist sentiment and activity, having been established by the colonizers), to consolidate their power and wealth—to don, in Ariel Dorfman’s coinage, the “Empire’s Old Clothes"--and failed either to take their countries out of dependency or to transform social structures in the interests of the mass of the people.
>
> ("Anticolonialism, National Liberation” 56)

The usurping of power by a small section of national elites in postcolonial nations left a large section of the people alienated. The elites failed to bring into confidence the poor or

the dispossessed or to include them in democratic participation. By the 1960s, Sivanandan argues, “many of these societies were under some kind of authoritarian regime (often military) or one-party state, the elimination of opposition usually being justified on the grounds that national unity—essential for economic growth—was threatened by tribalism or separatism” (58). The national elites who united fellow people from the colonies on the basis of nativity and with the promise of liberation, according to Sivanandan, continued after independence with a “culture and mentality” that remained “dependent and derivative, and their rule, far from being a search for the autonomous development of their societies, in effect continued the domination and exploitation of the people begun by imperialism, but this time in indigenous form” (57).

There has thus been a disjunction between the pre-independence expectations of liberation, equality, citizenship and progress, and the realities of post-independence political climate in South Asia. According to Damien Kingsbury, postcolonial states did not fulfill the expectations of liberation as well as redistribution of previously expropriated wealth (13). Postcolonial states in South Asia, according to Kingsbury, have failed to inculcate a sense of “civic equity” among the people/citizens (12). The slow pace of economic growth, lackluster governments, and rampant corruption and capital accumulation by a powerful few led to dissatisfaction among the oppressed and the marginalized. So the oppressed have either tried to co-opt with the system through political participation or manipulation of the democratic process, of which Partha Chatterjee has talked a great deal in his discussion of political societies. Others have launched resistance movements, separatist insurgencies, and other such movements to

claim political sovereignty. Chatterjee has argued that “[t]he postcolonial state in India has after all only expanded and not transformed the basic institutional arrangements of colonial law and administration, of the courts, the bureaucracy, the police, the army, and the various technical services of government” (*Nation and Its Fragments*, 15). For Chatterjee, the political success of nationalism in ending colonial rule has not signified a true resolution of the contradictions inherent in this discourse (a contradiction he conceptualizes as being that between “capital and people-nation"). Chatterjee rightly claims that the rise of ethno-territorial movements and the “anti-modern, anti-Western strands of politics...preaching either a fundamentalist cultural revival or a utopian millennialism” in postcolonial societies were the result of the continuing legacies of colonialism (*Nationalist Thought*, 169). Chatterjee, in his work on political societies, has shown how western models of modern normative democratic practices, which provide the fundamentals for the relationship between the government and its people in civic societies, have been trumped and twisted in order to gain the legitimacy of vast populations outside the civic order. It is in the interstitial space of political and civic societies that the questions of belonging, estrangement, and identity were negotiated. Chatterjee’s conception of political societies could help in the understanding of the alienation of marginal communities in South Asian nation-states and their assertions as a political group. Chatterjee in his work on political societies has explained the rise of political societies which bring to the fore the issue of everyday illegalities of subaltern life in India as well as most of the developing world. He explains the distinction clearly in his book *Politics of the Governed* by charting out two conceptual connections—one connecting civil society to the nation-state founded on popular sovereignty and granting

equal rights to citizens, and the other connecting populations to governmental agencies pursuing multiple policies of security and welfare (37). According to Chatterjee, one strand of the failure of postcolonial societies was the failure of the governments to provide fundamental facilities such as healthcare, housing, education, and employment. Another strand was the failure to make citizens feel secure about their collective identities in terms such as language, ethnicity, community, and religion. The first strand led to the rise of what Partha Chatterjee has called "political societies" shaped a new kind of governmental practices in postcolonial societies, such as in the case of illegal squatter settlements getting facilities such as electricity and water through government institutions by their power to negotiate and influence governmental agencies. Chatterjee has provided a substantial conceptual framework to understand the first strand of the politics of the dispossessed in his discussion of "political societies." Political society is a site of negotiation and contestation opened up by the activities of governmental agencies aimed at population groups (*Politics of the Governed* 74). Thus, he envisages the civil society as an elite construct and political society as a subaltern construct, which he claims is a more appropriate way of politics in most of the world. Chatterjee's concept of political societies helps explain the "entanglement of elite and subaltern politics" in India and most of the world (39-40). The two domains of the postcolonial condition in South Asia as envisaged by Chatterjee—the domain of the civic society and the domain of the political society—are concerned with the practice of democracy and governmentality.

I propose a third domain which emerges as an offshoot of the politics of identity and belonging. I call this third domain the domain of the "native other." It is on the fault lines

of the transition between anti-colonial nationalism to postcolonial nationalism that the figure of the "native other" emerges as testimony to the incomplete project of nation building and citizenship in postcolonial societies.

Nation and its others: "native others" in South Asia

Colonial difference was based on the representation of the colonized "other" as culturally and racially inferior to the colonizer. There were three kinds of "others" during the colonial period: the savage other, the black other, and the oriental other (Oomen, *Social Inclusion in Independent India*). The postcolonial South Asian political class appropriated the tool of othering from the colonizers. In the context of India, Partha Chatterjee argues that the colonial strategy of representing the "other," what he calls "colonial difference," comes up "not only in relations between countries or nations but even within populations that the modern institution of power ... invoking these differences are, we might say, commonplaces in the politics of discrimination" (*Nation and Its Fragments*, 33). According to Chatterjee,

> Rival conceptions of collective identity have become implicated in rival claims to autonomous subjectivity. Many of these are a part of contemporary postcolonial politics and have to do with the fact that the consolidation of the power of the national state has meant the marking of a new set of differences within postcolonial society. (*Nation and Its Fragments*, 26)

For Robert JC Young, whereas the idea of the "other" in postcolonial critique is based on the distinction "between the modern (the same) and the residue that is nonmodern (the

other). Yet people regarded as being outside modernity, or outside the West, are still frequently described and categorized in terms of the concept and the term of “the other” ” (36). Young makes a very useful distinction between two kinds of the “other.” The first one is the one which is seen as an “other” by the society or the dominant party. Another “other” is the one who is really not anyone’s “other” as such, but only individuals or groups who have been, or feel that they have been othered by the society. In the same article, Young further elaborates on the idea of the “other” that he claims has gone unexamined but has remained in theoretical and historical discourse since the 1980s. He writes of the distinction thus:

> first, the invention of the “other” as a philosophical category of the philosophy of consciousness from Hegel onwards, in which the other is, in fact, not essentially different but the very means through which the individual becomes aware of him or herself, and vice versa (a formulation developed most actively in recent times by Sartre, Levinas, and Lacan); and second, the category of whole cultural or ethnic groups as “other” which has been the product, as well as the object of, anthropological inquiry, in a formulation that goes back at least to John Beattie’s *Other Cultures* (1964). (37)

This distinction is very significant to study the formation of the “other” in postcolonial South Asia. The “native other” appears as an amalgamation of the two--the psychological and philosophical other, and the anthropological other. Because othering is a subjective process in which one feels that he is being othered, but at the same time, his othering is done through various cultural political and sociological markers. So it is essential to

understand the “native other” as the amalgamation of the two kinds of other. The movement for decolonization was an anti-imperialist, nationalist, hence nativist struggle. But contrary to anti-imperial nationalism, which was directed against the colonial rule of the European settler, postcolonial nationalism was directed inwards, where the recent migrants or those not conforming to the ethnic and linguistic heritage of the majority community, were now made the “other.” Nativism was an essential cultural move towards the struggle for national liberation. According to Laura Chrisman, “the move to embrace and promote native culture marks the beginning of anti-colonial identification, for these intellectual elites and individuals, as such of both psychological and political value: the intellectuals begin to overcome the self-hatred and alienation that colonialism created” ("Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies” 192).

After decolonization, the erstwhile colonial elite swiftly took the baton from the colonizer and reproduced the difference of the “us” versus the “other” upon its fellow citizens. But this time around, the meaning of nativity had changed. Whereas in the colonial period the term denoted a subservient colonized subject, hence an “other: of the colonized, the postcolonial condition brought the native to the position of power. The native took upon oneself the task of setting the terms of defining nation, nationalism, and citizenship. Hence, the term “native,” which according to Elleke Boehmer was once “a derogatory label for colonized people [was in the postcolonial used to] designate those who “belong to a particular place by birth” (*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* 9). Following Trinh Minh-ha, Boehmer argues that the term has been transposed “from the point of view of “them” to that of “us"” (Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* 49-53, qtd in Boehmer 8-9).

Boehmer has made a significant distinction between the terms “native” and “nativist.” Although both these terms are related to each other, she explains, they should not be confused with one another. To explain the distinction between these two, she uses a third term, “Creole,” which means “those who are descendants of settlers yet who are indigenous to their land of settlement in the sense of being native-born.”[5] The distinction between Creole and native “other” is that, whereas the former is a distinct minority, something of a left-over of colonial rule and has limited agency, the latter has enough agency to assert itself culturally, ethnically and politically. Moreover, the migrant or the native “other” from across the border is neither considered a colonizer or a Creole but simply a migrant.

As such, “native” in itself is not a pejorative term. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a native is “A person born in a specified place or associated with a place by birth, whether subsequently resident or not,”[6] such as to mean a local inhabitant of a

5 A Creole, as Boehmer further clarifies, “is also a mixed language which has formed as a result of cultural contact.” (*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* 9). An important distinction between creole and native “others” (here, specifically in therms of the language, is that there is no major change in the language of the native “others” from that of their so called former homes; the Nepali or the Urdu or the Tamil languages are more or less similar with those across the border in the real of imaginative former homelands of the native “other.” Creole, however, is a distinct linguistic variety which has emerged out of assimilation with the language of the land where they have lived.

6 “Native.” *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press). oxforddictionaries.com.

certain place. But its use in discourses on nationalism as diametrically opposed to other "categories" of people in the national scheme has brought its negative connotation. But its pejorative connotation actually derives from the colonial context when it was used to identify a population of the colony as primitive and savage as compared with the colonialist's claim of oneself as racially and culturally superior.[7] This pejorative turn of the meaning of the term is explained by Ashcroft et al in their book, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. According to them, the root sense of the term as someone who was born to the land was

> overtaken by a pejorative usage in which the term "native" was employed to categorize who were regarded as inferior to the colonial settlers or the colonial administrators who ruled the colonies. "Native" quickly became associated with such pejorative concepts as savage, uncivilized or child-like in class nouns such as "the natives". (142)

For the colonialist, the term meant the members of primitive cultures of the colonies that did not conform to the cultural and civilizational markers of Europe. Thus the term was used to identify the "cultural inferiority" of the Natives Americans of Canada, the Maori

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7 According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, "In contexts such as a native of Boston or New York in the summer was too hot even for the natives the noun native is quite acceptable. But when it is used to mean 'a non-white original inhabitant of a country', as in this dance is a favorite with the natives, it is more problematic. This meaning has an old- feel and, because of its associations with a colonial European outlook, it may cause offense..." *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/native. Accessed on 20 December 2016.

people of New Zealand or the Aborigines of Australia, whose social and artistic forms were either invisible to the colonialist or were deliberately obscured (142).

The term “native” has changed over the decades especially after decolonization. Whereas it was used in the colonial period to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of colonized lands in a pejorative sense, it has later been “reclaimed by postcolonial critics to designate those who “belong to a particular place by birth” “ (Boehmer 8). Elleke Boehmer, following Trinh Minh-ha, argues that the meaning of “native” has changed from the point of view of “them” to that of “us” (Minh-ha 49-53, qtd in Boehmer 8-9). My idea of the native is somewhere in between these two kinds of native: Once the colonizer leaves the colony, the term native remains, and the meaning of the term “native” changes. Whereas the native was earlier used to denote the savage, the indigenous, the term gets a new meaning after decolonization. Postcolonial nationalism usurps the term, where it means the “authentic,” the “original inhabitant” without the pejorative sense. Whereas the term was used in subordinate position as compared to the settler—in the sense that for the settler, the term meant the “other” in relation to “us"--it is now used as a superior term to create the binary of the native “us” versus the “foreign other.” Now, the “native” has found someone else to impose what he had faced at the hands of the colonizer. But now, the foreigner, unlike the European colonizer, is subordinate. In the context of this research project, “native” is something similar to the identity of the Creole, without the connotation of a settler. Creoles are those “who are descendants of settlers yet who are indigenous to their land of settlement in the sense of native-born” (Boehmer 9). The “native other” is one who, like the Creole, may be born in that country to be considered a

native, but is still considered an “other” because of his/her “foreign” links. In the case of the “native other,” which is the focus of this research, the “other” is no stranger to the land. In many cases, it is precisely the familiarity with the land or the location that the “other” settles in that territory. Hence the native and the “other” are familiar to each other to the extent of hostile discursive practices of stigmatizing each other as a stranger. Whereas in the case of the migrant or the diaspora individual the “other” is a stranger, in the case of the “native other,” the struggle is over limiting the rights and claims of the Other, although in many cases the native knows that the “other” has no other place where he belongs. The native knows that the “other” belongs *here*, but still refuses to acknowledge the fact for the fear that the Other, if not controlled, might pose the challenge to the native’s ethnic, communal and locational hegemony. Hence it is also a power struggle between the native and the “other” to belong, or a struggle in place making.

One important aspect that distinguishes the native “other” from the stateless is precisely the inclusion of the former in the juridical modes of belonging, which the stateless is deprived of. So the discrimination of the native “other” is more subjective a process than that of the stateless. It is also important to distinguish the native “other” from exiles. Native “others” are not exiles. The one thing that connects native “others” with exiles is that the native “others,” like exiles, as explained by Edward Said, are cut off from their roots, their land, their past” (Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile* 140). Said writes that

> Exiles generally do not have armies or states, although they are often in search of them Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their

> broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people. the crucial thing is that a state of exile free from this triumphant ideology—designed to reassemble an exile's broken history into a new whole—is virtually unbearable, and virtually impossible in today's world. (140-141).

In the case of native "others," they too are cut off from their roots, land and their past, but they attempt to leave those things behind and construct new roots, land and leave their past. Whereas exiles keep longing for a return to their homeland, there is no other homeland for the "native other," so there is no such longing. The adopted home becomes the homeland for the native "others," although they may retain the linguistic, ethnic and cultural heritage of the earlier homeland. While native "others" enjoy official legal protection under the constitutional provisions of the state, they feel a sense of disbelonging which stems from the fact of their being labeled foreigners by the so called natives. In many cases, their tussle is not with the state *per se*, but with the "native communities" who take upon themselves to make a distinction between who is a citizen and who is not, or who is a native and who is a foreigner. Native "others" have agency, and it is manifest in various forms. Mostly, the discrimination of the native "others" is not through juridical and political factors but discursive practices. So, native "others" strike back by taking recourse to various means, riding on the strength of the sheer number of their population. In this sense, they have agency, in contrast with other groups that deal with the question of dislocation, such as refugees and stateless people, who have no agency.

The ambivalence of the “native other” is their existence in the interstitial space of modern normative political practices and that of the political society. The similar experiences of stateless, migrant, diaspora or refugee populations make it difficult to chart out a stark contrast between these concepts and the “native other” that it seems pertinent to explain what a “native other” is not in the South Asian context. A “native other” is not a Bhutanese refugee living in Nepalese camps—although the very fact of their refugeehood was based on the idea that they were the native “others” in Bhutan--because the Bhutanese refugees have a clear sense of homeland and physical homes in Bhutan, where they have wished to return eventually. Rohingyas of Myanmar are native “others,” hounded by the state and the fellow citizens, the Buddhist extremists, because of their different religious faiths. It is their identity of the “native other” that has perpetuated their sense of dislocation in Myanmar and have been rendered refugees, the Asian “boat people” literally floating on their boats in the Arabian sea. The Parsis of India and Pakistan may not be called native “others” as they have largely been integrated into these South Asian societies and have a clear sense of citizenship although their idea of an original homeland in Central Asia sustains their identity as a long-term diaspora community. Similar is the case of the Burghers in Sri Lanka, who have integrated into the Sri Lankan society as citizenship, although their sense of an original homeland—to which they have no prospect of returning—sustains their chequered sense of belonging and identity.

In that sense, native “others” are those whose immediate homelands could be “traced” back to the immediate neighborhood within South Asia; those who have political agency

and demographic strength to claim state resources for their community's welfare and can, when necessary, politically mobilize their community members for a "homeland" through a restructuring of the state. So, it is not only the "desire" of home as in the case of migrants, refugees, stateless and diaspora, but also the "demand" of a "homeland" that sets the native "others" apart from the rest. To use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's term, the native "others" use "strategic essentialism" to assert their identity and aspirations for belonging even though they are aware of the essentialist nature of inherent in them, to deal with the larger problem of "othering." Ethnic identity groups are seen using this strategy in their attempts at consolidation of their identity to achieve a larger goal.

The "native other" is not to be taken as a static category. It is quite dynamic. According to actual material conditions in the home societies (or host societies for that matter), it is the "other," but once it settles down and has political agency, it turns the othering on its head and imposes the same to other categories of people. Anjali Gera Roy rightly observes that "[A]fter a period of estrangement, migrants are gradually integrated into host societies and hostility shifted to new arrivals" (17). This leads to the shift of the attitude of the "native other" towards new immigrants, which is seen in the case in South Asia, as will be elaborated later on. When the "native other" becomes settled as a proper native, it tends to take it upon itself to play the role of the host to newcomers, ultimately helping repeat the vicious cycle of the hostility between the host and the guest. Zygmunt Bauman writes of the situation in his article "The Making and Unmaking of Strangers" as follows: "Host populations' hostility towards new migrants is based on the first arrival rather than

indigenous rights. After a period of estrangement, migrants are gradually integrated into host societies, and hostility shifted to new arrivals.

Who, then, is the "native other" in South Asia? Simply speaking, native "others" are those individuals and communities who do not have a separate "homeland" than the one where they reside and are subject to "othering" through a discursive categorization of "foreigner" or "outsider" by the so-called host community or the host country or both. The othering could happen through the state's preferential choice of one language, religion or ethnicity over another or the "son of the soil" narrative that renders those who do not conform these categories as outsiders. "Native other" denotes the "other" whose status as a native of the nation-state could be proven in view of the generation of his/her family that has lived in the present location, but is still discriminated against in terms of language, religion and a translocal connection with cultural/ethnic communities across the border etc., such as in the case of Tamils in Sri Lanka or Nepalis in West Bengal. Additionally, the dominant community makes deliberate attempts to pinpoint the "other" as belonging to a homeland outside of the borders of the present nation-state such as in the case of the Muhajirs, the Indian Nepalis, the Madhesis, the Tamils, etc. In this sense, the "native other" is an intimate neighboring other rather than an alien other. The othering of the "native other" therefore happens not because of the powerlessness of the other but precisely because of the power and political agency of the other which threatens to destabilize the agency of the native or the autochthonic community.

In terms of the domains of belonging and dislocation, the experiences of the "native other" in South Asia do not seem to be very different from that of a migrant or a diaspora in the West. As with the latter, the former has to negotiate its space through language and claims to a place. But what differentiates the South Asian migrant in the West and the one within South Asia is that whereas the former is in a minority position in the West, the latter, backed by its substantial political force, resorts to asserting its space within the territorial and national borders often through violent insurrections, as we have seen in the case of Pakistani Muhajirs, Sri Lankan Tamils, and Indian Nepalis. The issue here is not so much about diasporic constructions of home and belonging as it is about the native's claims to *belong*.

Unwelcoming homes and the native "other"

With the advent of the global capitalist age which facilitated unprecedented international travel and migration, notions of home and belonging have changed drastically. Where, then is the space of the "native other," who has to struggle to belong, and aspiring for home within homeland? Where do the aspirations of the global cosmopolitanism and search for "authentic homeland" intersect? This seems to be the challenge facing the "native other." The very idea of a nation-state is to co-opt the multiplicities of regions and locations into a singular whole, whereas the different communities within these locations attempt to carve out separate spaces for themselves. It is in this tussle that the "native other" finds oneself struggling to relate to both and carve out a space of belonging and locatedness. In addition to the legitimacy derived from belonging to a particular nation-state, "others" articulate their claims to home through political mobilization as well.

Whereas their sense of homelessness derives from the dominant narratives that at many instances consider them outsiders, or foreigners or aliens, they, on the other hand, try to claim their nativity through counter-narratives.

In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Avtar Brah writes that “On the one hand, “home” is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of “origin.” On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality, its sounds and smells” (192). The concern of this research project is not so much with interpreting the “left behind” homes of the migrant or the exile but the homes, or absence thereof, in the “here and now” within South Asia. What does the idea of home mean to those who cannot return home? Or to those who hope to return home one day but cannot? Or to those who are at home and still do not feel “at home"? Or to those who are forced into exile and create a new “home” in a separate nation? For instance, what does “home” mean to Pakistani Muhajir who migrated to Pakistan, the promised “homeland” for Indian Muslims? What does “home” mean to a Sri Lankan Tamil to whom Sri Lanka is home and remembers no other “home"? What does home mean to an Indian “O-deshe"--Bengalis who migrated to Indian/West Bengal from East Bengal/East Pakistan during various partitions and stayed forever—or an Indian Nepali decades or centuries after their antecedents adopted these respective countries? In fact, for the Indian Bihari, called Muhajir upon arrival in Pakistan, migrating to Pakistan itself was “homecoming.” For Nepali-speaking Indians, India is their only home, but their loyalty to the Indian state is questioned on the basis of their ethnicity and language, which is similar to that of the

Nepalis of Nepal. These “migrants,” who do not have a separate “motherland” or “homeland” than India, where they have lived all their lives, have expressed their dissatisfaction, often through violent methods, with the state’s attitude towards them. In terms of language, culture, and ethnicity, the Nepali-speaking Indian Gorkha community intermingles with Nepal’s population that it becomes extremely difficult to draw clear borderlines. Indian by citizenship, culturally connected with the Nepalis across the border, they are a community constantly struggling to define their sense of cultural and political belonging.

As much as the memorialization of lost or left-behind homes, South Asian narratives also dwell upon the idea of *making* homes. The question of home became the most contested during the partition of India, and it has been represented in various literary writings on the issue of partition. The creation of a new homeland also resulted in the break-up of individual homes and families in both countries. Parents left for Pakistan, children stayed on. Brothers left, sisters stayed. Besides deaths and dislocations, what were the emotional costs of the partition on individual families as their homes were broken apart? Why did families decide to break apart, and what did they think of each other? What justification did they give to each other, and what promises had been made, what expectations of reunion, or lack thereof, were made? When the two countries became “enemy countries” immediately after partition, what did the separated family members think of their family members in the enemy countries? If the breakup of homeland/country seeped into personal lives and families, did the enmity between the nations seep into family relationships as well? These are questions that come up in thinking about the dislocation

brought upon the people of the subcontinent by the partition of India. However, this research project will not specifically focus on that, and will rather discuss issues that came up after the event. The issue of homes breaking apart during the event of 1947 has already been dealt by various scholars and creative writers. This research project will therefore move beyond Partition, partly also to establish its ripple effects comtinue to be seen in South Asia.

The sense of displace arising from severance of ties to one's nation or a specific location form a significant part of diasporic writing. For Niranjan Mohanty, "Displacement or migration has been an important theme in English diasporic literature where the writers often belong to postcolonial countries" (62). Mohanty further writes, in the context of globalization when the fixed notions of home is a concept that is skeptical, "what one attempts when physically separated from the home or homeland is to construct an image of home or family and attribute it those values once held dear...Even though the physicality or materiality of home is left behind, the *concept* of home and its inherent value systems continue to occupy the creative writer" (62).

Transnational migration has opened up new avenues for literary representation of diasporic narratives that place the concepts of home, unhomeliness, dislocation and belonging in the center of such narratives. So much so that these concepts are now considered as peculiarly diasporic concepts. Anjali Gera Roy points out, "Homelessness and displacement have largely been examined in relation to diasporic formations outside nation-states" (16). But we need to go beyond such narratives of home and belonging as

diasporic concepts. What do we do with narratives that depict unhomeliness at home itself? How are narratives of "home" in home narratives different from the narratives of home in diasporic narratives? What this research project attempts to do is to re-establish the concepts of "home" and "belonging" in the geopolitical realities of "home countries" by bringing them back from the domain of diaspora and migration studies, so as to come explore the way nationalism, national identity and the making of the native "other" played out in South Asia. It is only by looking at the issue of home and belonging at the originary point in postcolonial South Asia that we can fully grasp the depth and density of alienation and dislocation.

For Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder, "home" is something that evokes the feeling belonging and protection, and whose antonym is "foreign," which conveys the feeling of alienation and unease (*What is Migration History?* 3). The concern here is with finding the sense of being at home for the non-immigrant who nonetheless has to come to terms with the paraphernalia of migrancy attached with his/her identity being the "native other." This is an ambivalent position, quite different from the home-abroad dialectic that concerns diaspora studies or the immigrant genre. This research project is on location and not on homelessness as a material condition. Taking a cue from Marangoly George, it would not be too impertinent to say that this research project addresses the question of "national homelessness." So the issue here is that of nation-making as home-making or its reverse—home-making as nation-making. Marangoly George echoes this when she writes that "[h]omes are not mental places. Imagining a home is as political an act as imagining a nation" (*The Politics of Home* 6). In a similar vein, Edward Said has written in his book,

The World, The Text, and the Critic, that "the idea of place does not cover the nuances, principally of reassurance, fitness, belonging, association and community, entailed in the phrase *at home* or *in place* … It is in culture that we can seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases *belonging to* or *in a* place, being *at home in a place*" (8).

Two significant books that deal with the politics of home are incidentally titled similarly as "The Politics of Home," although their foci, and hence also subtitles, are different in their conceptualizations of home. Rosemary Marangoly George's *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-century Fiction (1997)* looks at home from the lens of dislocation and othering, whereas Willem Duyvendak's *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Europe and the United States*, as hinted by the subtitle, looks at home from the lens of belonging. These two books lay out multiple perspectives of looking at home, and warrant considerable discussion to understand the various conceptions and connotations of home. In her book, Marangoly George presents two different concepts of home as conceptualized by two thinkers across time and space. "Home is everywhere," said Novalis (9). "Home is nowhere," claimed bell hooks (9). What lies between these two locations, everywhere and nowhere? Can we *locate* "home" between these locations? What do we call such a "home" if one is found at all? In *The Politics of Home*, Marangoly George contemplates what home is, and how are we to travel from Novalis" omnipresent home to bell hooks" non-existent home. She suggests that home is many things simultaneously: it is based on select inclusions and exclusions based, among other things, on kinship; it is manifest in geographical, psychological and

material levels; it is a place of violence and nurturing; it is not a neutral place; it is a community (9). For Marangoly George, home country, just as home, is based on difference and exclusivity, and in the instances of confrontation with what is "not home" with foreign, with distance" (4). She has identified the question of longing for home in the immigrant genre, such as that of M G Vassanji, as "international homelessness" (8). The immigrant genre that Marangoly George talks of is different from this project in fundamental ways. Homeland politics in much of South Asia derives from the desire of the "native other" to lay claims to the nation as genuine citizens, and this is where they differ from the immigrant genre. The immigrants or even diaspora, are happy getting a marginal position in the nation, whereas the native "others" try to stake their claims through whatever means and agency they have, sometimes violent insurgencies as seen in the case of many postcolonial conflicts in South Asia. The immigrant genre, thus, according to Marangoly George, is carved out of postcolonial literature as a sub-category. "What happens to the category of "postcolonial literature" after this sub-category of the immigrant genre is carved out of it?" she asks a rhetorical question. Her answer is that the category of postcolonial literature, rather than shrinking, "would expand to include all twentieth-century literature produced from any location that is informed by the dynamics of colonialism" (197). She further writes that under the rubric of postcolonial literature, "all literary texts that unsentimentally interrogate the seductive pleasures of "feeling at home" in homes, genders, a specific race or class, in communities and nations, could be read as "immigrant" fictions" (197).

Jan Willem Duyvendak in his book *The Politics of Home* proposes a "three-level scheme" for understanding the politics of home, especially in the USA and in Europe, where he has focused his research project. In his scheme, home consists of the micro level of the household, the meso level of the community and the macro level of the nation (111). But he also concedes that reality is "more complex" than the three-level scheme he has proposed, as these are both inter-related and also leave out other instances of feeling at home, for instance, the workplace. So he goes on to propose a "four-sphere scheme" again. The spheres he proposes are the following: the sphere of the *individual household*, the *economic* sphere of the workplace, the *associational* sphere of the community and, finally, the *politico- cultural* sphere of the nation- state" (111, original emphasis). Duyvendak further writes,

> Feeling at home is a sentiment that has its appropriate and even necessary place in the politico- cultural sphere. To be inclusive, this "home" needs to be open and hybrid in its symbols – necessary to peacefully accommodate different feelings of home in the public arena. ...Feeling at home in the nation-state, then, is the capacity to experience comfort among relative strangers. This does not equal the footloose cosmopolitan dream – it is the daily reality of an ever- growing group of grounded people living their home feelings "lightly." (124)

A third perspective is given by Sara Ahmed in her essay "Home and Away," in which she defines home across three registers: "home is where one usually lives, home is where one's family lives or home is one's "native country" (340). Ahmed immediately concedes that this definition is "vastly inadequate," for, "it is possible that one's native country

might not be *felt* as a home" (340, original emphasis). For Ahmed, "home is not simply about fantasies of belonging – where do I originate from – but that it is *sentimentalized* as a space of belonging ("home is where the heart is"). The question of home and being at home can only be addressed by considering the question of affect: being at home is here a matter of *how one feels or how one might fail to feel*"(340, original emphasis).

The concept of home thrives precisely on the blurring of boundaries, which is what makes it a complex and intriguing concept. In what follows, I propose a typology through which to consider configurations of home in South Asia as represented in contemporary fiction. This is not to claim that these caveats are themselves independent of each other and that the idea of home can be compartmentalized into these different caveats. They only point out the general tendencies in which experiences or feelings of home are expressed in literature.

a) Home as a private and physical space of dwelling

In addition to the material comfort it provides to its residents, home as a physical space also provides a sense of an identity and belonging. It is also a marker of the residents' social identity. In my town in western Nepal, my home is identified as the house with a cow. Although the cow is long gone, the identity of the house remains the same. It explains the family's identity and social status, and also works as a geographical landmark. In the context of the novels taken up here, the idea of a physical home is also very important, as these homes stand as private spaces of dwelling as well as metaphors of the nation. Examples include the Wellawatte house, which is divided into the upper and

lower territory, representing the North and South divide in Sri Lanka, or the Tamil and Sinhala dominated territories. The Cho Oyu, which represents the decay of old colonial architecture, meaning that even though India was a postcolonial country, there were so many inheritances of the colonial times that remained a testimony to the grandness as well as decay in contemporary times. In *The Golden Age*, the house "Shona" is a testimony to the Bengalis' struggle for Bangladesh. The house represents two metaphors —the stealing of the gold to build the house (in which a mother had to sacrifice her ethics and morality to secure her children from the greedy uncle and aunt), and also the promise of a golden future, represented by the famous phrase "Amar Shonar Bangla" which had been the metaphor of a promise of a golden future.

b) Home-land as homeland

The longing for home, or rather, the longing for *belonging* at home, ultimately, is the longing for the nation, that is, to be accommodated within the definition of what constitutes a nation. So even before when we begin to talk about home, it is ultimately the territorial location of a particualar nation-space that we end up talking about. Language, culture and customs become makers of one's affiliation with home. In the case of Rehana Haque in Anam's *A Golden Age*, of Shiva and Yashodhara in Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, as also in the case of the Gorkhaland supporters in the case of Desai's in the case of Nepalese in *The Inheritance of Loss*, language plays an important part in identity politics, and in the politics of home and belonging. Being at home, or feeling at home, is crucially linked to one's belonging to language. Language is a major domain in which questions of home, affiliation, and belonging are interrogated (Gunew; Sarvan).

c) Homelessness at home

What does “home” mean to a dislocated person perceived as a “stranger” in a location s/he has called home for generations? Where do the ethical responsibility of the dominant community and the political responsibility of the state intersect when it comes to welcoming the stranger? And on what ethical basis does the dominant community welcome the stranger when the very act of welcoming creates a dialectic of “us” and the “other”? The position of the “native other” is closer to this feeling of being homeless at home. Charles Sarvan points out, quite convincingly, that the fact of having a house does not necessarily mean that a person has a home. Moreover, being among your people does not necessarily make you feel “at home,” such as in the case of the Aborigines of Australia or the Native Americans who were “turned into exiles in their own homeland...” (Sarvan 112). For Avtar Brah, “It is quite possible to feel at home in a place and, yet, the experience of social exclusions may inhibit public proclamations of the place as home” (193).

The concern of homelessness is not limited to these perceived migrants, strangers or native “others.” In a different context, the Dalit leader B.R. Ambedkar expressed his concern about the homelessness in the form of untouchability facing Dalits in India. Consider the following conversation between Gandhi and Ambedkar, which took place on August 14, 1931, at Manibhavan, Malabar Hill, Bombay:

Ambedkar: “Gandhiji, I have no homeland.”

> Gandhi: “You have got a homeland, and from the reports that have reached me of your work at the Round Table Conference, I know you are a patriot of sterling worth.”
>
> Ambedkar: “You say I have got a homeland, but still I repeat that I am without it. How can I call this land my own homeland and this religion my own, wherein we are treated worse than cats and dogs, wherein we cannot get water to drink? No self-respecting Untouchable worth the name will be proud of this land.” (Keer 164-167)

Ambedkar’s claim of Dalits being homeless in India helps explain the concept of homelessness at home. Historically, Dalits have always lived in India and are thus no strangers to this land. But this does not stop them from being “homeless,” as Ambedkar puts it, because of their being treated as lesser humans. So, homelessness, as Ambedkar shows, is not about the physical dislocation of individuals but the psychological dislocation and alienation from a place and its people.

d) Home is everywhere, home is nowhere: cosmopolitan belonging and perpetual unhomeliness

In his essay “Imaginary Homelands,” Salman Rushdie foregrounds the significance of memory in the reclamation of homelands through allegorical means. Illustrating his dislocation as an Indian migrant in the West, Rushdie writes,

> It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk o being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we

> must also do so in the knowledge—which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (10)

Rushdie goes on to write that the India that he can reclaim through fragments of memory, what he calls “broken mirrors,” was *his* India, one that he calls “a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions” (10). According to Malashri Lal and Sukrita Paul Kumar, Salman Rushdie’s concept of “imaginary homelands “pushed the geographical and political space into the cartography of the mind” (vii ["Introduction"]). For Chandra Talpade Mohanty, being at home refers to “the familiar, safe, protected boundaries” whereas “not being” home is a matter of realizing that home was an “illusion” of coherence” (Mohanty and Martin, 1986, qtd in Lal and Paul Kumar, 2007, ix). Lal and Paul Kumar argue that “through this shift from physical location to psychic interpretation we have bridged the gap between subjectivity and agency” (ix [“Introduction”]). For Rushdie, home is not the real location or a physical space but a re-imagination of the past. For Rushdie, the present is foreign, and the past is home (*Imaginary Homelands*).

With the advent of the global transnational flow of migrants, the idea of home as a physical or even political affiliation became more and more diluted. Rather, the idea of belonging or feeling at home in the world became imperative. Characters such as Hiroko and her son Raza in Kamila Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows* show that they can feel at home

anywhere. There is also an important caveat which again comes from the very fact of transnational migration, where individuals do not feel at home anywhere. Heidegger, using the term uncanny, says that the experience from "within" is the feeling of not being at home even when at home. For Paranjape, home is an unfamiliar space, already lost. What is not home becomes home, and this new home seems radically familiar (*Making India*). For Prema in Manjushree Thapa's novel, *Seasons of Flight*, her homeland becomes suffocating, so she leaves home for a wider world. But even when away, she feels "unhomed," thus a perpetually homeless figure.

One of the common thematic concerns that link the texts being analyzed in this research project is the problematic of "homecoming" or "return" if not only that of leave taking or dislocation. In Munaweera's novel, for instance, Lanka and Yashodhara come back only to realize that their homecoming is not so welcome, and it results in the death of Lanka and the dream of a beautiful future in their homeland. This leads to another emigration of the protagonist Yashodhara. Yashodhara leaves a better life in the US; Sai, at the end of the novel, resolves to leave home in search of a better world. In Desai's novel, Biju's eventual homecoming is not welcome as he is robbed by Gorkhaland activists, his gender identity itself inverted as he is made to wear a flowery gown as he is robbed off his trousers. In this novel, too, Sai is seen leaving home at the end, as Kalimpong becomes increasingly oppressive to her. Leave taking, therefore, appears as a final and perpetual condition of characters in most of the novels discussed in this research. In Thapa's novel, Prema leaves for America to get away from her unhappening life in Nepal, and her return home becomes only part of a formality, as she

finds herself unwanted at home, especially because of her estranged relationship with her sister. Similarly, in Shamsie's novel, homecoming for Karim becomes a dissatisfying experience, as he finds that the city is no longer feels like home, that he is a stranger in his home city of Karachi. He returns within several hours after landing in Karachi, unable to bear the complexities in his relationship with his best friend, Raheen.

It is with keeping the caveats discussed above in mind that I examine what home, or the absence of the same, means to the "native other" in contemporary South Asia, and how contemporary literary texts have dealt with postcolonial societies' grappling with nationalism, nation-making, and alienation. The objective of the project is not to provide an authoritative definition of home—trying to do so would lead to a bigger confusion, as the research project would show—but to explore, interpret and analyze individual as well as collective understandings and experiences of what home means in multiple senses. The latent objective of this research project is also to bring into focus the writings that foreground ideas of multiplicity, plurality, and conviviality in contemporary fictional texts —primary novels—which, by virtue of their multi-vocality, open up the possibility of a multiplicity of ideas and experiences.

CHAPTER TWO

Homeland Politics and the Mutuality of "Othering": Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

On 11 July 1992, a mob led allegedly by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) cadres demolished the bust of Bhanubhakta Acharya, the pioneer of Nepali poet, located at Chowrasta in the eastern Himalayan town of Darjeeling in West Bengal, India. In its place was erected a bust of another Nepali poet, Agam Sing Giri. Bhanubhakta is revered by Nepalis in both Nepal and India, not because he was the first poet to have written poetry in Nepali extensively, but his Nepali translation of the *Ramayana* was instrumental in the development of Nepali cultural identity and nationalism. Although Bhanubhakta never traveled to Darjeeling (Sarkar, "Bhanubhakta and Nepali Nation" 4), he was, and continues to be, revered as the pioneer Nepali poet by Nepali-speaking Indians[8] In

8 I use the term "Nepalese Nepalis" to denote the citizens of Nepal, and "Indian Nepalis" to denote the Nepali-speaking citizens of India. However, factors such as the historical movement of people from Nepal to India, facilitated by an open border, the possibility of staying indefinitely in India without a visa, and the accessibility of employment and business opportunities in formal and informal sectors in India, etc., tend to make it difficult to distinguish between who is an Indian Nepali and who is a Nepalese Nepali. For instance, Nepalis living as Indian citizens in cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, etc., do not identify themselves in terms of a political community as the Indian Nepalis of the northeastern states and Darjeeling and

Darjeeling and other parts of India. Bhanubhakta's birth anniversary on July 13 is commemorated in Darjeeling with as much diligence and devotion as in Nepal, and his poetry is included in Nepali subject curriculum in schools and colleges in India where the subject is taught. Why, then, did the GNLF cadres take an unpopular decision of demolishing the bust of such a revered poet and then replacing it with that of Agam Sing Giri, who was not very well known outside his hometown of Darjeeling and the surrounding region and would not usually qualify to replace Bhanubhakta in Chowrasta?[9]

The answer to the question lies at the heart of the politics of identity of the Indian Nepalis. Bhanubhakta, the GNLF cadres claimed, was a "Nepalese" poet who would have no place among the Indian Nepali community. The Indian Nepali community, they claimed, needed to find a cultural icon of its own. Hence the substitution of Bhanubhakta by Agam Sing Giri. The concern of the Indian Nepalis is: "How do we define our identity, and how do we distinguish our identity from that of others who have similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds like ours?" This desire for self-recognition, and the and the struggle for getting recognized by others as an identity group with certain unique characteristics defines the identity of Indian Nepalis as a political community.

Kalimpong territories of India do. In this sense, the term "Indian Nepalis" denotes a political community of Nepali-speaking Indians who wish to identify as separate than Nepalese Nepalis, and attempt to forge an identity as a separate nation within India.

9 A golden bust of Bhanubhakta was later re-installed in the same place after severe backlash from the Indian Nepali community.

The struggle of the Indian Nepalis is to come out of the long shadow of “Nepali” identity as it is understood in the context of Nepal. The paradox is that to forge a formidable identity of a political community in India, Indian Nepalis have to move over ethnic and linguistic differences among themselves. This has created a homogeneous identity of Indian Nepalis. They have not been able to step out of that shadow because they need something to bind them together—and what binds them together is that shared past of Nepali history and former homeland. So, even when they attempt to forge a new identity, they have to do so by harking back to their past, which is intricately linked with Nepal.

There are paradoxes in the way the Indian Nepalis foreground their ambivalent identity, caught as they are in the double bind of nativity and diaspora consciousness. The first paradox is in the political domain, and which undercuts the attempt of the Indian Nepalis to distance themselves from the Nepalese Nepalis vis-a-vis the 1950 Treaty, is the way in which the Indian Nepalis appealed to the Nepalese prime minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, to intervene and negotiate on their behalf, with the Indian establishment, for a separate statehood for the Indian Nepalis. This shows that even though the Indian Nepalis attempt to distance themselves from Nepal and the Nepalese Nepalis, they have not completely neglected the possibility of Nepal as a nation-state playing a positive role in the formation of their political identity in India.

The other paradox, which is in the cultural domain, is the way in which the Indian Nepalis assert their identity as a distinct identity group—distinct even from the Nepalese Nepalis, but they are still bound with the Nepalese Nepalis in many ways. There is also a paradox

in the way Indian Nepalis have asserted their monolithic identity. The category of the Indian Nepalis is constituted by many diverse ethnic groups with their linguistic and cultural traditions, such as Bhotias, Lepchas, Tamangs, Magars, Newars, Gurungs, Brahmins, Chhetris, Dalits, to name a few. They each have their mother tongues (except the Brahmins and the Dalits who speak fairly standardized Nepali), but in a couple of centuries of identity formation, they have all come under the hegemonic umbrella of ethnic Nepalis. Michael Hutt has mentioned that “A striking feature of the diaspora is the rapidity with which mother tongues appear from the censuses to fall into disuse in favour of Nepali...” (Hutt 114). According to Hutt, the Nepali language is the primary basis of self-identification among Nepali diaspora community, which is why Nepali remains at the heart of the argument about the status of Nepalis in India and, to a lesser extent, Bhutan (Hutt 116).

The question of identity and identification is also intricately related with that of non-identity and misidentification. Identity assertion, therefore, comes with the misidentification of others; the assertion of “us” comes laden with the creation of “them.” The process of othering is not a one-way process with a clear-cut dichotomy between the “us” and the “other"; the relation of power between the two may be inverted into another dichotomy where the formerly “othered” may also assume the role of “othering” others. Nira Yuval-Davis has argued that one needs to go beyond the “us” and “them” dichotomy in theorizing identity. For Yuval-Davis, any theorization of identity, belonging and construction of boundaries should consider the fact that the “relationality” between “us” and “them” is not always homogeneous but can be varied ("Theorizing Identity” 275).

The perpetuation of otherness is, therefore, a multifaceted process which at times could also invert the relationship between the two. The concept of belonging based on a narrow, homogeneous sense of racial, ethnic and location-based identity does not necessarily make way for co-belonging, but may end up becoming the agent of multiple dislocations of several "others."

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* dwells upon the politics of belonging and location in the backdrop of the ethnoterritorial insurgency of the Indian Nepali community in the Eastern Himalayan towns of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The novel examines how ideas of foreignness and migrancy play the role of "othering" the "native other"; how the politics of location and ethnoterritorial exclusivity alienates others; and how the colonial legacies of discrimination and the spread of global capitalism work in tandem to construct a class of historically alienated and dislocated citizens. Desai depicts that identity politics in postcolonial India has been fought in the interstices of "home" and the "world" or between the territorially and ethnically defined ideas of a pure homeland and the desires of cosmopolitan citizenship of the world facilitated by globalization. Desai unravels the inheritance of alienation and dislocation of inter-generational characters in Kalimpong in the wake of the Gorkhaland Movement, and intermittently abroad. Whereas Indian Nepalis live as an alienated ethnic community in the margins of the national imagination, their politics of belonging and location, as depicted by Desai, can act as agents of alienation and dislocation of others. Desai's novel is focused on four main characters who are alienated figures in their various ways: they are all affected by the same forces of historical legacies of colonialism as well as global capitalist power structures.

In two parallel narratives, *The Inheritance of Loss* traces the trials and tribulations in the lives of characters. In one narrative strand, a retired judge named Jemubhai Patel referred to in the novel as "the judge," lives a solitary life—with a low-caste Dalit cook named Pannalal—in a derelict colonial-era house called Cho Oyu in the foothills of Kalimpong. The judge's solitariness is upset by the arrival of Sai, his orphaned granddaughter. When the novel opens, in 1986, Sai is sixteen is in a romantic relationship with Gyan, her mathematics tutor. Gyan is a Nepali-speaking Indian belonging to a family of Gorkha mercenaries and farmers. The year is 1986, when the movement for Gorkhaland launched by the GNLF is at its peak and which Gyan joins eventually.

Another narrative follows the travails of Biju, the cook's son, in America as he runs from one underground kitchen to another working as an illegal immigrant, chasing the elusive "Green Card," and returns for good once the futile quest comes to an end. Biju's journey to the West parallels to that of the judge in his youth during the fag end of colonialism, when he travels to England to get an education and returns home to join the Indian civil services. The twin journeys to the West symbolize the continuity of economic ties and interdependence between the East and the West, or the global South and the global North. Sandwiched between the twin journeys is the location of Kalimpong, with its Janus-faced character—one looking towards the global world of transnational migrancy and cosmopolitanism and the other towards the postcolonial politics of nationalism in India.

Indian Nepalis and the quest a Gorkha identity

Writings on the marginalization of the Nepali community in India abound in the Nepali language. The Sikkimese novelist and critic Indra Bahadur Rai and the Assamese novelist Lil Bahadur Chhetri are the most renowned of the Nepali writers who have consistently written on the Nepalese community in India. Rai's *Aaja Ramita Chha* ("There is a Carnival Today") digs deep into the alienated lives of Nepalis in Darjeeling in post-independence India up to the time when the Gorkhaland Movement begins. Chhetri's *Brahmaputrako Chheuchhau* ("Around Brahmaputra") depicts the Nepali community in Assam being unable to feel at home partly because of their cultural differences with the 'host' community. Among English-language writers, Prajwal Parajuly, a Sikkimese Nepali-speaking writer, has dealt with the issues of dislocation and alienation of the Nepali-speaking community in the North East of India. His novel, *Land Where I Flee*,the dislocation of the doubly marginalized due to caste and ethnic divisions even within the Gorkhas who are already marginalized themselves.

In his article "The Politics of Recognition," Charles Taylor writes that "Our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others" (25). Taylor further writes that

> a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (25)

The problem of (mis)recognition has remained at the core of the Gorkhaland problem, as several factors have caused the ambivalence with which their identity is viewed. The foremost questions, some of which are rhetorical, to ask are the following: Who are the Indian Nepalis? Are they "native" Indians or are they Nepali migrants who have just overstayed? How does one distinguish Indian resident Nepalis and seasonal migrants? Or how does one identify an Indian Nepali living in the North East of India from the one living in other parts of the country? Is there a "native" Indian Nepali, and what are the criteria for differentiating a native and a migrant Indian Nepali? Or simply, how long does a Nepali, as any other migrant community in India, need to reside in India to become a native of India? Does a Nepali serving in the Gorkha regiment become a native or does he remain an outsider even if he decides to stay back in India? Naïve as these questions may sound, they are quite complicated considering the centuries-long trans-border flow of Nepali migrants into India preceding the formation of the nation-states in South Asia. These questions hint at the ambivalence that defines the identity of Indian Nepalis, especially those living in the north-eastern Himalayas of India. These questions also point to the ambivalence that defines the identity of the Indian Nepalis.

The Indian Nepalis, who constitute the largest Nepali-speaking community outside Nepal, occupy the space of a marginal ethnic group struggling, with limited success, to construct and define their identity in the national consciousness of India (Hutt, "Being Nepali without Nepal"). Swatahsiddha Sarkar rightly points out the problem of identification of the Indian Nepalis, when he writes that "[T]he fact whether the Nepalis settled in India for generations are to be reckoned as Nepali diaspora or as Indian citizen largely defines

the contours of Gorkha ethnicity and nationalism in India... ” (“Nepali Nation” 31). The question of whether the Nepalis are a diaspora community or native citizens is one of the significant issues pertaining the identity struggle of Indian Nepalis. Michael Hutt argues that “whether they are of Nepalese birth, or Gorkhas born in India, all ethnic Nepalis in India are liable to be assumed to be foreign nationals or immigrants” (122). This leads to the alienation of Indian Nepalis who have to straddle the thin border of nativity and foreignness. The singularly significant problem facing the Indian Nepalis is thus the problem of identification. Their cross-cultural similarity with the Nepalese Nepalis across the border and their equal dissimilarity with the language and culture of much of their state of West Bengal have compounded the sense of identity crisis among the Indian Nepalis. It is this problem of identification that has caused the Indian Nepalis to want to identify themselves as different from Nepalese Nepalis.

Nepalis initially settled in India mostly from the Eastern parts of Nepal, due to a mutual necessity of the immigrant as well as the host population—in this case, the British colonialists. The expansion of the British colonial rule in India made it necessary for the colonialists to recruit a large number of soldiers for their mercenary needs as well as peasants for expanding the tea plantations in the northeast of India. The British need was reciprocally met by the need of Nepalis fleeing poverty and feudalism in Nepal. According to Tanka B. Subba, Indian Nepalis now

> form one of the largest and most widespread *diasporic* communities in India numbering about 5 million and found in almost every part of India

with greater concentrations in the states bordering Nepal. (Subba 213, emphasis mine)[10]

The alienation of the Indian Nepalis, especially from their home state of West Bengal where they form a significant minority, for the most part emerged from the fallibility of the concept of linguistic states that became the *modus operandi* for state formation in post-independence India. The idea of linguistically oriented federal structure for post-independence India was, as Sunil Khilnani mentions in his book *The Idea of India*, to embody to the idea of "layered Indianness, an accretion of identities" (175). Khilnani observes that for Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, the creation of the new states was "a step towards rendering the practices of democratic government more comprehensible, rather than as a challenge to or dilution of Indianness...Such adjustments recognized the principle that the institutional forms of being Indian could within broad limits be revised" (176). However, as India scrambled to bring together the different tribal and ethnic territories to form a federal nation-state the inevitable rise of ethnic assertions began right after Independence. The 1950 Constitution recognized 14 major languages; the 1961 Census listed 1,549 languages as mother tongues (Chandra et al., 107) which mean that the task of reorganizing the states on linguistic basis was no mean feat. As Bipan Chandra and other scholars have argued, one of the most challenging tasks of the consolidation of India after Independence was the determination of language. They argue that the language imbroglio had two major aspects: the dispute over the official language, and the linguistic reorganization of the states. On the one hand, the imposition of Hindi as

10 Even Tanka B Subba is not able to rid himself of the temptation to call the Indian Nepalis as a "diasporic" community, which speaks of the difficulty in the identification of Indian Nepalis as a native community in India.

the official language faced serious challenges from non-Hindi speakers, prompting widespread protests especially in South India. It took the Indian government as long as till 1967 to resolve the issue of a national language when it came up with a bilingual policy of using English as an associate language in addition to Hindi for official work at the Centre and communication with the states (Chandra et al. 123). Another and more important, aspect of the consolidation of the nation-state was the linguistic organization of the states, in order also to correct the wrongs done by the haphazard marking of boundaries, without taking into consideration the linguistic and cultural specificities of the different ethnic and linguistic groups across the subcontinent, during the partition. The States Reorganization Act, passed by the Parliament in 1956, provided 14 states and six centrally administered territories (Chandra et al., 128). In his book *Sub-regional Movement in India*,Chiranjib Kumar Kar has argued that the States Reorganization Act that was set up in 1956 to come up with a framework for linguistic reorganization of Indian states was unable to create homogeneous and unified states, leaving a large section of people from different states dissatisfied (Kar, *Sub-regional Movement*). However flawed the reorganization was, it was nevertheless a political necessity in the immediate aftermath of the independence, when India was gradually consolidating itself as a nation-state. Aditya Nigam argues that this act of linguistic diversification was an act of nation-building and fostering of the sense of nationalism among the various linguistic and ethnic groups in India. He writes, “For Indian nationalism to be ‘Indian’ it had no option but to accommodate the immense linguistic diversity that constituted India” ("National Minorities” 18) The reorganization was soon followed by inter-state rivalries and intra-state identity politics that led to the alienation of minority groups within the states. While

the states' reorganization did not resolve all the problems relating to linguistic conflicts, it "removed a major factor affecting cohesion of the country" (Chandra et al. 131). The alienation of the Nepali-speaking Gorkhas is complicated by the fact of their difficult, if not antagonistic, relationship with the people of West Bengal. The dissatisfaction of ethnic Nepalis with the state of West Bengal emerges from the fact that their language, Nepali, is different from the one imposed by the West Bengal government. The Darjeeling district did not historically belong to the West Bengal region but was acquired by the British East India Company from Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal (Kar 23). When the state of West Bengal was created, the numerical majority of the Nepali-speaking people of the Eastern Himalayas was overlooked, and those areas were incorporated in the state which predominantly consisted of the plains, dominated by Bengali speakers.

According to Robert JC Young, one of the markers of nationalist drives in postcolonial countries "for domination over heterogeneous peoples can often be located in the history of the language policies of the independent national state" (25). Young further writes,

> The civil wars and the often continuing civil unrest that, in many cases, followed independence have often been the product of the nationalist creation of a deep colonialism that has sought to make indigenous people or other minorities invisible. (25)

In another article, Robert Young has argued that "The homogeneity of the nation-state constructed and enforced at independence was quickly challenged by ethnic nationalisms, for example by Kashmiris, the Sikhs and the Dalits in India..." (Young, *Postcolonialism* 59*).* Young maintains that "The geographic boundaries of the state, and the legal and

political structures that are the legacy of colonialism, exist in a continued state of contestation by indigenous ethnic and fourth-world groups" (Young 59-60). The GNLF Movement was thus symptomatic of the political alienation of different identity groups within India, including the ULFA and Khalistan movements. In fact, the issue of an independent state for the Indian Nepalis had been raised as early as 1907, and it was raised again by CPI in 1954, but it was summarily sidelined at the time (Hutt, "Being Nepali"). The voice finally became the most effective only in 1986 when the GNLF Movement articulated it most vociferously and through violent means. The Movement grew violent, with an estimated 1,200 people killed in two years between 1986 and 1988. The violence stopped with the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), along with the recognition of Nepali as the co-official language (along with Bengali) of the three hill subdivisions of Kalimpong, Kurseong, and Darjeeling.

Apart from the issue of ethnolinguistic difference that formed the core of the Indian Nepalis' quest for self-determination, another problem that rendered the Indian Nepalis with an ambivalent identity, thus becoming a significant factor that led to their alienation shortly after the Independence, was the 1950 "Treaty of Peace and Friendship" between India and Nepal. According to the Indian Nepalis, the Treaty made their status in India at par with that of the Nepalese Nepalis whereas they wanted nothing to do with Nepal politically. Article 7 of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, signed on July 31, 1950, declared that

> The Governments of India and Nepal agree to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same

> privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of a similar nature. ("Treaty of Peace and Friendship")

For the Indian Nepalis trying to find their political space in India, the Treaty came as a blow as it did not distinguish between Nepalis from India and Nepal. This reciprocal nature of the treaty made the Indian Nepalis feel vulnerable, because their identity depended upon Nepalese government policies such as in the case of 1989, when the Nepal government's steps to curb the rights of Indians in Nepal (Hutt 124). No wonder, then, that the Gorkhaland Movement that began decades later featured the quashing of the 1950 Treaty as one of their main agendas.[11] In her article "Choosing the Gurkha," Mona Chhetri, asserts that whereas the Indian Nepalis were resentful of the provision that kept them at par with the Nepalese Nepalis and gave them all the rights "like" Indian citizens, they also had to constantly battle the myth of "double homeland" (6). This idea of a "double homeland" which Chhetri has borrowed from Lopita Nath, is important to understand why the identity of Indian Nepalis is ambivalent and suspicious. The very idea of understanding Indian Nepalis vis-a-vis Nepal is a highly contentious issue, and which also remains at the heart of the politics of identity. The seeming difficulty or rather the unwillingness on the part of the state and the dominant communities, in differentiating

11 The Treaty has since been amended to address the concerns of the Indian Nepalis. The Treaty has remains one of the most controversial issues in the politics of Nepal till date, including one among the 40 demands pressed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) before launching an armed civil war in 1996, and has been the agenda of various official visits of Nepalese prime ministers in India, although actual amendment remains to be seen.

between the Indian Nepalis from Nepalese Nepalis partly explains why the Nepalis of India feel alienated in India. This fact is alluded to in *The Inheritance of Loss*, where Lola, the Bengali woman living in Kalimpong, claims that the reason the whole problem of Gorkhaland has escalated is that of the "porous border...You can't tell one from the other, Indian Nepali from Nepali Nepali" (129). This apparent similarity and the difficulty to differentiate, between Indian Nepali from Nepalese Nepali has been a defining feature of the Gorkhaland Movement that the author Kiran Desai has not dealt with sufficiently in the novel but is worth exploring to understand the complex identity of the "native other."

The demand of the Indian Nepalis for recognition as a distinct "nation" within India given their distinct ethnic and linguistic identity is marked by contradiction that belies the inherent fallibility of creating a homogenous identity for a diverse group of people for political goals. While the claim of the Indian Nepalis for a separate statehood in the linguistically oriented federal framework of India is based on their claim to a fully evolved language and ethnic difference from the Bengali population they have made their best efforts to distance themselves from the Nepalese Nepalis. So, the GNLF came up with literary and cultural icons peculiar to their location in India, as against the ones they shared with the Nepalese Nepalis.This resulted in the demolition Bhanubhakta's bust in Chowrasta of Darjeeling, and installation in his place the statue of Agam Sing Giri. This yearning for distancing themselves from the Nepalese Nepalis stems from their fear that their ethnic and linguistic identities are seen as co-terminus with that of the Nepalese Nepalis.

The trans-local connection of the Indian Nepalis with the Nepali counterparts across the open border in Nepal complicates the former's sense of ambivalence in constructing their identity as an independent ethnic community in India. The precariousness of the identity of Indian Nepalis is evident in the fact that the terms Gorkha or Nepalis themselves are dubious in that they immediately appear as the Nepalese Nepalis. This is exemplified by the experiences of Tanka B. Subba, is an Indian national (his mother hails from Nepal) is immediately identified as a Nepali because of his surname. It is understandable why Nepalis in India feel alienated, as their own identity bears a suspicion because the "Nepali" name itself is dubious. So they have been using the term "Gorkha," thinking it to be a more neutral term, although, again, the term itself originates in Nepal, and immediately links with Gorkha district in Nepal in common parlance. According to Subba, the very reason that the Indian Nepalis used the term Gorkha instead of Nepalis was that of their desire to dissociate themselves from Nepal and Nepalese and ownership of Indian national identity, and ultimately, the fact that they do not wish to be identified as a diaspora community. Subba further says,

> Here is a community which is suffering from an acute sense of insecurity due to their fuzzy national identity. The historical fact that India itself is a land of migrants gives them little solace. The fact that their language is now one of the national languages of India also gives them little comfort in the face of violent evictions they have faced in the recent past. But they also know that they have no land in Nepal where they could go back to and build a house. They really have nowhere to go. (Subba, Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture")

Whereas they assert their distinct identity an ethnic community independent of the Nepalese Nepalis, which, as Michael Hutt considers has been their struggle throughout the twentieth century (125), hence save themselves from the burden of being considered foreigners or immigrants, they have not been very successful so far. As Michael Hutt points out: “... a Newar or a Limbu born in Darjeeling, Bhutan, or Assam will always be considered ’Nepali’, even if he or she adopts the label ’Gorkha’ or ’Lhotsampa’... .” (Hutt 125).

In The Inheritance of Loss, a conversation between two Bengali sisters Lola and Noni, living in Kalimpong as alienated figures themselves in the middle of a formidable Nepali population, exemplifies the way Nepali quest for their rights are interpreted. While the younger sister, Noni, questions why, despite living in that place for several generations, why Nepali is still not taught in schools, Lola answers:

> Because on that basis they can start statehood demands. Separatist movement here, separatist movement there, terrorists, guerrillas, insurgents, rebels, agitators, instigators, and they all learn from one another, of course—the Neps have been encouraged by the Sikhs and their Khalistan, by ULFA (etc.) (128-129).

This is an important point in the novel where the inadequate knowledge of the government policies places Noni at a distance from the reality. Desai’s depiction of Noni as someone who is concerned with the disadvantaged position of the Nepalis but without knowledge of the real situation shows the way in which elites make observations about the “other.” In fact, the Nepali language has been used as a medium of instruction in the

primary level in Darjeeling schools from as long back as 1927 (Hutt 125). One major setback to the question of language came in 1958 when the West Bengal Official Languages Bill opted for Bengali as the sole official language, which led to widespread protests and was ultimately rolled back in 1971 (Hutt 125). Though the issue of language has remained one of the reasons which the Indian Nepalis have claimed as their readiness for self-determination, it has not always remained the most important factor. Thus, the introduction of Nepali in school-level education seems to have made no significant impact on the demand for an autonomous state.

Desai's novel opens with a scene in which four GNLF cadres, all of them teenage boys, raid the judge's home to loot his guns and other materials. It is the peak of the GNLF Movement, and the social authority of the retired judge is challenged and even inverted on the back of a violent insurgency that disturbs the social fabric of the region. In the novel, Gyan represents the dislocated lot who found themselves bracing for identity and sense of belonging as they felt they were left out of the process of nation-making in postcolonial India. The Nepalis have lived in the northeastern states of India for centuries on the fringes of the social and political dynamics. Gyan is a product of the colonial project in India, as his ancestors, hailing from Nepal, had been settled in Darjeeling in the 1800s to work on a tea plantation. Moreover, with unsuspected loyalty, his ancestors—from his great-grandfather to his uncle—lost either lives or limb while serving as soldiers in the British imperial army. So what is the place of the likes of Gyan in postcolonial India? Indian Nepalis find themselves in the margins of the political and social structures, as is exemplified by a poster distributed in one of the Gorkhaland marches: " 'Please quit

the army at once. For when you will be retired then you may be treated as a foreigner' " (Desai 160). Gyan is thus confronted by the question of his identity and that of his co-ethnics, and the utter lack of hope and dignity, when he is reminded by a Gorkhaland leader that the Nepalis make eighty percent of the population of the Darjeeling and Kalimpong area, and that out of ninety tea gardens in the district, not even one is owned by a Nepali (159). The leader further vows to fight to defend their homeland, as "This is where we were born, where our parents were born, where our grandparents were born. We will run our own affairs in our own language" (159). The leader's speech speaks of the predicament of the Indian Nepalis who, like Gyan in the novel, are "fed up with being treated like the minority in a place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs" (9). Thus, as the Gorkhaland movement takes momentum, Gyan gradually becomes engaged with the movement and realizes the historical injustice done to his community. As Ashok K. Mohapatra suggests, Gyan wants to channel his passion for the movement for the homeland in a bid to gain meaning, manhood, maturity, and concreteness to his existence (23).

Politics of place and homeland

The novel includes autobiographical elements of Desai's experience of permanent dislocation in both racial and geographical senses: she has German ancestry from maternal grandmother's side; Bangladeshi from maternal grandfather's side; and Gujarati from paternal grandfather's side (Mohapatra 10). In an interview with Maggie Gee, she has talked about her own experiences as an outsider at home in India—in Kalimpong

itself, where she lived briefly with her family before leaving for London and later America. However, her "outsider" status is not so much in terms of two different locations of habitation but of the difference between an imaginary landscape she formed through her reading of novels, especially those of her mother Anita Desai, and her experience in Kalimpong. This is echoed by Desai in the interview when she recalls the turbulent history of Kalimpong, the north-eastern border town, which saw the contestation and shifting of national boundaries for generations before, during and after the British rule in India. She has highlighted that the issue of migration and diaspora is not only an issue of the global South and the North but also that of the internal structures of the South itself:

> When I was fourteen or so, we lived there before we left India. And then I entered another territory that also felt borderless in a very different way, another place where I was forced to think about the same issues, and I realised that migration and immigration are not really just Western issues, although we tend to discuss them in that way—but every country has these issues, India being one of them. (Gee 36)

Like Desai, her characters living in Kalimpong are hardly aloof from historical circumstances of colonization and globalization, as Desai writes that "certain moves made long ago had produced all of them" (199). Desai's depiction of Kalimpong is that of a cosmopolitan town with individuals from different ethnic, linguistic and national identities living dislocated and alienated lives. These include the retired Gujarati judge, Jemubhai Patel, his orphaned granddaughter, Sai, and the judges's cook, Pannalal, a Dalit from Uttar Pradesh, Gyan, a Nepali tutor to Sai, two aging Bengali sisters Lola and Noni,

an Englishman Father Booty, and a drunkard, Uncle Potty, among others. In its accommodation of various individuals and identities, a cosmopolitan locale such as Kalimpong can be welcoming as well as alienating at the same time. Kalimpong welcomes alienated people from everywhere, providing them with safe sanctuaries, such as for the Judge, for Lola and Noni, for Biju desperate to return from New York, and for the Nepalese great grandparents of Gyan who migrated in search of opportunities. However, it also alienates them—Judge is humiliated and robbed; Biju is robbed; Lola is humiliated and her home occupied by the Gorkhaland insurgents. All are made to feel that the place they have called home is, in fact, the imaginary homeland of the Indian Nepalis and that it cannot accommodate others. The purported homeland of the Gorkhas can exist only in the "unhoming" of others.

Being the marginal, border town always in flux the buffer state that has bore the brunt of tussles between nation-states, Kalimpong at once remains welcoming as well as an inhospitable location, a place of immense hostilities and its people, being the peripheral figures in the scheme of the nation formation, the residents of the town are an alienated people struggling to assert themselves. This very issue of constant flux and the immense burden of being a buffer zone of inter-generational migrations and nation-state formations is reflected in the novel when in the novel, Lola concedes that Kalimpong has hardly been a peaceful area. She reminds her sister, "When we moved to Mon Ami, the whole of Kalimpong was upside down, remember? Nobody knew who was a spy and who wasn't. Beijing had just named Kalimpong a hotbed of anti-Chinese activity..." (45). As the narrative voice says in the novel,

> A great amount of warring, betraying, bartering had occurred; between Nepal, England, Tibet, India, Sikkim, Bhutan; Darjeeling stolen from here, Kalimpong plucked from there—despite, ah, despite the mist charging down like a dragon, dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders. (9)

While the Gorkhaland Movement emerged out of the deep-rooted alienation of the Nepalis community in India, the fact that the Movement alienated the other communities living in Kalimpong in the course of the movement laid bare the vicious circle of alienation and dislocation that is characteristic of identity politics. The relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is not so straightforwardly dichotomous; it is blurred, especially in terms of the politics of place. In the context of the post-1980 identity politics in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong hills, the Nepalis themselves are involved in the dislocation of other communities in the areas. A dislocated group can also act as one that dislocates other groups or communities. Such counter-alienation is reflected in the novel when Kalimpong turns into a place that makes people homeless even as Gorkhaland activists launch their movement in quest of a homeland. The encampment of the Gorkhaland activists in Lola's garden inverts the hierarchy between the rich Bengalis and the poor Nepalis, turning the former into temporarily dislocated figures in their own home. Their home becomes an alien territory as Gorkhaland supporters occupy their home. The dislocation of the Bengalis as "enemy parties" in their own home extends to the entire area of Kalimpong so much so that

> Even the Biharis, Tibetans, Lepchas, and Sikkimese didn't acknowledge you. They, the unimportant shoals of a minority population, the small

> powerless numbers that might be caught up in either net, wanted to put the Bengalis on the other side of the argument from themselves, delineate them as the enemy. (279).

Here, the fabled oppressor is now the oppressed, in a reversal of power relations. The nativist approach of the Nepalis is itself contradictory, as the Nepalis, who make the predominant population of the Darjeeling hills, are themselves migrants who have settled by dominating and thus in the third space, between the location of his origin and his destination, as Bhabha would put it, where he has to find a semblance of "home. The insurgency renders the Bengalis subordinate to the Nepalis at least in terms of the autochthonic claims to the place. In that sense, all the residents of Kalimpong other than the Indian Nepalis are native "others." Even the very beginning of the novel exemplifies such inversion when four Gorkhaland soldiers invade the judge's house to rob him of his rifles and make him, Sai and Cook prepare dishes for them. The class arrogance of the judge and Sai is dismantled, and the power relation inverted when the GNLF cadres make the judge cook pakora in the kitchen, a task he had not done in decades even for his sake. This inverts the power relation between the GNLF boys and the judge, who at other times would command more power because of his background. The boys make him say phrases such as "*Jai* Gorkha" and "I am a fool" (9). Desai writes, "It was an awful thing, the downing of a proud man" (8). This shows that alienation is not a one-way street; the alienated can also become the oppressor just as in the case of the novel, where the Gorkha boys reverse the power hierarchy by making the judge submit to their dictates.

Another instance when the role reversal comes into play is when the Gorkha boys collude with police officers to evict Father Booty from his farm, compelling him to leave India as he is found with renewed residence permit “for to renew the permit was such a bureaucratic hell, and never again did he plan to leave or to re-enter India....He knew he was a foreigner but had lost the notion that he was anything but an *Indian* foreigner” (221, emphasis original). Father Booty, thus a “nativized” Indian, living in the country for forty-five years. However, once he gets into trouble, the usually inactive government authorities wake up and force him to leave the hills for whose development he “had done much more...than any of the locals, and without screaming or waving kukris...” (223). Moreover, ironically, residents of Kalimpong and Darjeeling, notwithstanding their ethnic identity, are made to rally behind the Indian Nepalis, for the support of a movement that tries to dislocate those very identity groups: “It was requested (required) that every family —Bengali, Lepcha, Tibetan, Sikkimese, Bihari, Marwari, Nepali, or whatever else in the mess—send a male representative to every procession, and they were also to show up at the burning of the Indo-Nepal treaty” (193). According to Oana Sabo, the attempts of the Indian Nepalis to create a so called authentic location for themselves is something that undoes the notion of cosmopolitan hospitality because the creation of such a homeland is possible only at the cost of excluding others living in the same territory. Sabo rightly points out that the Nepalis themselves were a diasporic population at one point of history as they had migrated from Nepal as laborers to work in colonial tea plantations ("Disjunctures and Diaspora,” 375-392). So, the claim of Darjeeling and Kalimpong as an authentic “homeland” of the Indian Nepalis is not only a linguistic misnomer but also a sociologically and historically unauthentic claim. Such claims turn the Indian Nepalis into

perpetrators of the same crime they are purportedly fighting against—that of turning into what political theorists call “possessive community” which, according to Roberto Esposito, means “a self-enclosed, exclusionary group, one that is possessive of its own borders and that seeks to exclude others from its domains” (Esposito, *Communitas*; qtd in Casey “Possessive Politics”).

One of the most significant issues in the entire discourse on the identity and the politics of identity of the Indian Nepalis is the question of who is the “native” in the eastern Himalayas. Whereas the Indian Nepalis fought for a separate homeland for themselves on the basis of ethnic and territorial integrity of their community, the question remains as to what happens to those who were there before their ancestors came to these hills? Tanka B Subba has pointed to this question, which has not been addressed adequately in discourses on nativity and migrancy in the eastern Himalayas. Subba writes:

> The train of immigrants from Nepal could not have touched the Darjeeling, Sikkim hills without laying of the rails by these ancient settlers. But this part of the Nepali society is virtually ignored and they are considered as “immigrants,” “settlers” and “foreigners” even in Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas which were the abode of the Kiratas since pre-historic times. (*Dynamics of a Hill Society* 36).

Subba’s exploration of the role of the native Kiratas in laying the foundation for the migration of the Nepalese Nepalis to the eastern Himalayas points to the problem in the idea of the homeland and the politics of homeland. The question then remains as to how the Indian Nepalis can claim the ancient homeland of the Kiratas as their own? Are they

not outsiders themselves as compared to the Kiratas who lived in the area before they arrived?

For Rosemary Marangoly George, home is to be understood in terms of its binary, of what is "not home." She writes, "Homes and nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered "not-home" (4). From this vantage point, home thrives in its exclusivity as well as its ability to render others homeless. Such exclusivity is maintained in the demand for Gorkhaland Movement when individuals belonging to ethnic and linguistic identities other than Nepali are excluded from claiming Kalimpong as home. According to Ashok K. Mohapatra, "The contradiction inherent in it between the disenfranchising cultural forces of globalization and nativist politics of homeland movement in Darjeeling creates an epistemic muddle" (22). The novel thus presents the concept of home and homeland as problematic issues: home is not necessarily something that provides one with comfort and solace as it is usually thought to be. This is reflected in the novel in the experience of Biju, who returns home to Kalimpong after years of migrant life in the US, only to be robbed by the GNLF boys, as if he "wasn't wanted in Kalimpong and he didn't belong" (278). Although he does not have a physical home in Kalimpong, he has a filial connection with the land, as it is where his father lives, albeit in a subordinate position as the cook of the judge, in a ramshackle of a house. Biju's real physical home is in Uttar Pradesh, but his return to Kalimpong as homecoming is symptomatic of the idea that home is not necessarily a point of physical location but an imaginative one. The fact that Biju is robbed of all his belongings—and also his gender role as he is also robbed of his trousers and made to wear flowery pink gown—upon his

arrival in Kalimpong indicates the fallibility of home as a place of belonging and security. After harrowing three years in the underground kitchens in New York Biju returns home with a dream to start anew, but it gets a possible deferral, as the robbing renders him penniless in the end. Thus, the homecoming for Biju is what David Ralph and Lynn A Staeheli have called an "unsettling" experience. According to Ralph and Staheli, migrants, upon their arrival, "often feel they no longer belong in their home place. Thus, while seeking to stabilise an identity, they encounter the complex relationships between identity and belonging" (523). Hence, Biju, a postcolonial migrant in the global age, is rendered a dislocated figure upon his homecoming by the native "others." Just as in the case of Lola and Noni, who are made to surrender their belongings to make a living in the proposed Gorkhaland, Biju, too, has to offer all his belongings "for the sake of the Movement" even as he returns "home" to Kalimpong. Biju is the quintessential dislocated figure of the late-twentieth century global south, caught up as it was between the old world of postcolonialism and the new world of globalization. He is an unwanted figure everywhere he goes: in New York, his identity is that of a third-world migrant with papers, working in basement kitchens and changing jobs every time there is a chance of his identity as an illegal migrant being exposed; back in Kalimpong, he is unwanted as the Gorkhaland movement, in its search for authenticity and native identity, finds him lacking, although his belongings remain "useful" for the movement; he has little sense of belonging with his native Uttar Pradesh where he has hardly lived himself. Biju's inhabitation is thus in the third space, between the location of his origin and his destination, as Bhabha explains, where he has to find a semblance of "home." Biju's homecoming is hardly celebratory; upon his homecoming, Biju becomes an "unhomely"

figure, belonging neither at home or away. Biju's case is that of a persistent outsider at home and abroad; in that sense, the idea of cosmopolitan belonging sounds bogus for those who do not have the wherewithal to survive in both highly politicized ethnoterritorial societies as well as global capitalist societies.

"Other" alie*nations*

Alienation is also a subjective idea that is inherited, as Desai shows in *The Inheritance of Loss*.It is not the idea of dislocation at a particular location because of nationalist discourses that one gets displaced or alienated. The curious mix of the personal and the political become intertwined to create a sense of double alienation, just as in the case of the judge. The solitude of Cho Oyu helps the judge live as an outsider, a "foreigner" in his own country. He is, in fact, a self-made alienated man in contrast with the "other," whose alienation is caused by someone else. The loneliness of the judge is apparent in his sitting "at the far corner with his chessboard, playing against himself" (1), unable as he is of establishing a cordial relationship with another human being. Thus, the only living being he is attached to is his dog, Mutt. For the judge, the way of life he chooses "in this shell, this skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country..." (29) is at par with his alienated condition. However, that is not necessarily the case for other characters, who are struggling to find their space in the social setting of Kalimpong. The curiosity of the villagers and even the policemen about Cho Oyu originates from the fact that the judge is a mysterious, solitary person who has no social interaction whatsoever even though he commands some respect because of his status as a retired judge. The house, Cho Oyu, represents the decay of postcolonial India, where Indians live in colonial leftovers without

the willpower and wherewithal to repair what they have, so much so that one of the GNLF boys advises the judge, “House needs a lot of repairs” (7). The decay and disrepair of the household and the anxiety caused by the arrival of Sai is apparent in the fact that Sai, on the first day at Cho Oyu, is made to use a tablecloth for quilt, “for the last sheets had long worn out” (34) while the dog is wrapped in an angora shawl. The way he speaks, addressing himself and his granddaughter in the third person pronoun “one” shows his inability to connect with himself and with others: “[o]ne must not disturb one another. One’s had to hire a tutor for you....” (34) The judge’s agony over Sai’s arrival, and Sai’s hatred of the features and manners of the grandfather, lead them to enter into a reciprocal relationship based on mutual loathing for each other. For Sai,

> There was more than a hint of reptile in the slope of his face, the wide hairless forehead, the introverted chin, his lack of movement, his lack of lips, his fixed gaze. Like other elderly people, he seemed not to have travelled forward in time, but far back. (33)

The judge is a solitary man who detests visiting other people and being visited by other people, and his challenge is to himself, as he wants no other human contact. Hence his ability to forge a bonding with his dog than with anyone he ever met, including his wife. It is his hatred of humans that makes it possible for him to love the animal. Even though his position in Kalimpong is that of an embittered Indian living a solitary retired life in Kalimpong, his alienation, in fact, has roots in the colonial scheme of creating Anglicized Indians worthy of ruling their fellow citizens by following the order of the colonial masters. The judge is the embodiment of what Lord Macaulay wanted to create “a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in

intellect” that would help the colonizers rule the rest of India. Homi Bhabha called such persons “hybrid” individuals, torn between the cultures of the East and the West. The judge is Macaulay’s mimic man. Colonial discourse encouraged the colonized subject to mimic the colonizer through adopting cultural values, assumptions, and institutions. The imperative of creating mimic men, as Macaulay’s 1835 Minute to Parliament makes it clear, was to impart European learning to the colonized people by “a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (Macaulay, “Minute by the Hon’ble T. B. Macaulay").

The judge’s alienation thus comes from his inability to associate himself with the rest of the Indians, caught as he is between the inferiority to the British but at the same time the vehicle of rule over his fellow citizens as he worked his way up the administration of the colonial system. His life in London is filled with alienation from the society, where he is discriminated, and also self-loathing because of his feeling of lowliness. The insult he faces from English girls for his smelling of curry ingrains him with self-loathing, because of which he gets into the habit of washing excessively, which remains a lifelong habit. Even after his retirement, he is never to be found without socks on his feet. The fear of display of his gums makes him unable to open his mouth into a smile. His existence in the fringes of social life in London renders him unable to socialize even upon return to India, so much so that even in his later life, he cannot *belong* to his people and place. His beating of his wife and eventual desertion—which is revealed towards the end of the novel in retrospective mode—stems from his alienation. His timidness, lack of confidence

as an Indian, his passive attitude and self-loathing, as he finds that in London, his skin color comes as a hindrance in his search for an accommodation. In England, his identity is also not acknowledged, as the English landlady, named Rice, calls him James rather than call him by his real name, thereby ripping him of the dignity to be called by his real name. His experiences of racial segregation in London make him turn inwards, and his solitude finds embodiment, his "pusillanimity and his loneliness" finding a "fertile soil. He retreated into solitude that grew in weight day by day. The solitude became a habit, the habit became a man, and it crushed him into a shadow" (39) and "[e]ventually he felt barely human at all, leaped when touched on the arm as if from an unbearable intimacy, dreaded and agonized over even a 'How-do-you-do-lovely-day'..." (40) The judge's alienation in Britain leaves him embittered; his sense of dislocation and his hatred of people turn into self-loathing He internalizes his alienation to the point that he remains a self-alienated person even in his later life, living as he does as a loner in Kalimpong. It is through such humiliation and self-loathing that Judge Jemubhai who "grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar" (40). and in desperate attempts to emulate the Britons, learnt to eat even chapatis and puris with knife and fork and in later days, "[I]nsisted that Sai, in his presence, do the same" (176) The humiliation meted out to him in England does not make him more human and sympathetic to others, but his impotence in the face of his humiliation from the British makes him turn towards his own people with hatred. The first victim of his hatred is his wife, with whom his relationship remains that of dominance, not of mutual respect. In is review of the novel, Pankaj Mishra writes that

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

The judge represents the decayed and last remains of colonial India, as he stays in a derelict colonial building that is at odds with the contemporary age. Like the recluse judge, the house itself is an alien structure, a kind of an aberration in postcolonial India, which is why it attracts the curiosity and envy of many people from the bazaar, including the Gorkhaland cadres who take "the opportunity to have a nosy look around" (11). Hence the Gorkhaland cadres

> were not impressed by what they saw. They surveyed the downfall of wealth with satisfaction, and one of the policemen kicked a shaky apparatus of pipes leading from the jhora stream, bandaged here and there with sopping rags. He shone his torch into the toilet tank and discovered the flushing contraption had been fixed with rubber bands and bamboo splints. (12)

The policemen's disappointment at the deteriorating condition of the colonial architecture, and of the owner, the judge who represented colonial and postcolonial power, is visible more when they turn the belongings of the cook upside down. Afraid of his own identity, the judge's life is that of a foreigner in his own country, a loner although now lives with his granddaughter.

Sai's hybridity is also the cause of her alienation, although she tries to find convivial relationships with others to get rid of her alienated space. She emerges as a hybrid figure in the transition between colonial inheritance of convent education and her life with her Anglophile grandfather at Cho Oyu, and her association with the outsider world through books, relationship with Gyan and other townspeople. Her relationships with the elders, and especially with Gyan and the Cook emanate from her guilt of being an inheritance of the colonial culture. Though, here too, the political becomes a reason her personal sense of alienation grows, because the rise of the ethnic conflict because of the Gorkhaland Movement takes a toll on her relationship with Gyan. For her to find herself at home in Cho Oyu, Sai has to speak in a language and a foreign accent that would keep her social and economic class apart from ordinary Indians. It is only in alienating herself from somebody of lower status than her, such as the cook, that she can present herself as tolerable in front of her grandfather. She is thus "an estranged Indian living in India." Sai is alienated from the people of her age because she is not sent to school because of her grandfather's fear that "she may come back picking up the wrong accent," by which he means the local Indian accent rather than the British one that he prefers. Hence, her friends are elder people living, as is mentioned before, alienated lives in Kalimpong.

Sai's estrangement with her grandfather because of the latter's alienated condition, and her shyness around her peers, leave Sai lacking in relatives "In a country full of relatives" (28). Unable to evoke a feeling of ownness from the judge, Sai attempts to create a filial bond with the cook through conversations and showing concern towards his lifestyle.

However, such an attachment is impossible to maintain because of the social and linguistic differences between them, as Sai has filial relation with the judge, who is the boss, and also that Sai speaks English whereas the cook speaks Hindi. This makes Sai turn to books and her wish to travel, hence her love for the *National Geographic* magazine and the desire to live by the sea where, "At least, the waves are never still" (69). Sai's interest in traveling and changing locations, knowing about the world outside of her tiny circle as reflected in the fact that she reads National Geographic, and the globe that she uses to help the cook know where his son lives, in America. The only person who is contemporary to her and is a possible companion to her—also because they are involved in a romantic relationship—is Gyan. For Sai, Gyan is her only way out of the alienating nature of her existence, but being another rootless figure who becomes aware of his rootlessness as the Gorkhaland Movement escalates, Gyan is an unreliable companion. His unreliability, or his gradual sense of alienation from Sai, comes, apart from his new sense of ethnonational assertion by the Gorkhaland Movement, through his realization that Sai is a dislocated figure in her lack of Indianness: she who could speak no language but English and pidgin Hindi, she who could not converse with anyone outside her tiny social stratum.

> She who could not eat with her hands; could not squat down on the ground on her haunches to wait for a bus; who had never been to a temple but for architectural interest; never chewed a *paan* and had not tried most sweets in the *mithaishop*, for they made her retch; she who left a Bollywood film so exhausted from emotional wear and tear that she walked home like a sick person and lay n pieces on the sofa; she who thought it vulgar to put

> oil in your hair and used paper to clean her bottom; felt happier with so-called English vegetables, snap peas, French beans, spring onions, and feared—feared—*loki*, *tinda*, *kathal*, *kaddu*, *patrel*, and the local *saag* in the market. (176)

Sai is brought up in a convent school, under the disciplinary strictures of Christians nuns, being taught that western values are superior to Indian values. This is also reinforced by the judge, who hesistates to send Sai to a local school, fearing that it would ruin her English accent. Sai, even as she lives as an Anglicized Indian, is distanced from the social reality at home, so when the GNLF boys order tea to be served, she "stewed tea in a pan and strained it, although she had no idea how to properly make tea this way, the Indian way. She only knew the English way" (6). Sai's position is that of an alienated figure in India, a kind of an Indian whom Bhabha has identified as a postcolonial hybrid character. Whereas she is located in India, her cultural affinity is with the colonial leftovers of the English language and the English culture, so much so that she does not know how to make tea in the Indian style (6). She is also a linguistic outsider, an English speaker whom her grandfather does not send to government school for the fear that she would "come out speaking with the wrong accent" (34), whereas her closest accomplice, the cook, is a Hindi speaker. Their friendship "is composed of shallow things conducted in a broken language...which make(s) it easier never to go deep, never to enter into anything that required an intricate vocabulary" (19). Sai's relationship with the cook, the subaltern "other," is a broken relationship, "conducted in a broken language, for she was an English-speaker and he was a Hindi-speaker" (19). However, Sai tries to establish a convivial relationship with the cook by overcoming the differences of class and language.

Sai's case is that of a modern, postcolonial South Asian individual who wants to straddle between the worlds of individualism and social justice. Whereas her sense of modernity derives from her interest to learn English ways, such as English way of cooking and the English language, she is also keen to maintain her social responsibility by trying to maintain a functional relationship with the "other," the cook who is below her level in the social hierarchy. Whereas the judge does not maintain that connection, Sai does so consciously. Her relationship with Gyan is also a part of her willingness to make a contract with the reality of home. She wants to get into the world of the Nepalis through Gyan, although her worldview is that of the western world she has acquainted herself with through her reading of books. From this perspective, Sai is also the cosmopolitan figure that Desai attempts to foreground. As against the other characters such as the judge, Biju and Gyan who are variously centered on their individual class and gender biases, Sai can form cordial relationships with various people or various backgrounds and geographies. It is true that she is hybrid and lost, but if there is anyone who can bring two worlds together, it must be Sai. She reads English and does not know how to make Indian style tea, but she tries nevertheless. Noni and Lola are too anglicized. The Indian Nepalis' attempt to create a monolithic state although their background is that of diaspora and migration. The *National Geographic* magazine provides Sai with the link to the outside world, and the globe she reads and uses it to show the cook where his son lives, gives her a bird's eye view of the world outside the cocoon of the Himalayan town.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, there are yet other characters who, though occupying peripheral positions in the novel's narrative, help understand how the degrees and forms of alienation vary among individuals. The cook represents the inheritance of servitude, poverty and subaltern life that has passed over generations. His pleading innocence during the gun robbery, that he is living only to see his son return, are lines that

> had been honed over centuries, passed down through generations, for poor people needed certain lines; the script was always the same, and they had no option but to beg for mercy. The cook knew instinctively how to cry. (6)

Moreover, his own life is that of longing for the return of his son. So he has alienated himself in his wait for his son. He is as good as dead in terms of his own life, except for his son. His own position is that of a subaltern, without agency. However, upon getting an opportunity, he repeats the same language of "othering" used by his masters while talking about Gyan, questioning the latter's ability as a teacher. "Nepalis make good soldiers, coolies," he says, "but they are not so bright at their studies. Not their fault, poor things" (73). The cook's condescending attitude towards the Nepalis such as Gyan represents the deep-seated stereotyping of the Nepali community in India. When the policemen come and turn the cook's belonging upside down, they "had exposed the cook's poverty, the fact that he was not looked after, that his dignity had no basis; they ruined the facade and threw it in his face" (18).

Apart from the cook, the two Bengali sisters, Lola and Noni, represent individuals who feel alienated at home as the demand for Gorkhaland, based on ethnic exclusivism, renders non-Nepalis outsiders. They are elites living comfortable lives in the Kalimpong

hills. Their purchases, even undergarments, come from England, setting them in a privileged position, hence aloof, from the lives of the dispossessed Nepalis. Lola is a hybrid character, living the life of an Anglicized Indian in Kalimpong, adhering to English lifestyle as a marker of class superiority. The narrator's description of Lola is thus:

> Her suitcases were stuffed with Marmite, Oxo bouillon cubes, Knorr soup packets, After Eights,
> daffodil bulbs, and renewed supplies of boots cucumber lotion and Marks and Spencer underwear—the essence, quintessence, of Englishness as she understood.... (46-7)

Like the judge, the Bengali sisters represent the remains of the colonial legacy, filled as they are with self-loathing for their own culture and praise for the colonial one. They are doubly alienated from their location: they are consumers of the Western cultural market, read European novels, and remain insulated from their socio-cultural environment. The only individuals they interact with are those of their own social and class background, such as Sai, Uncle Potty and Father Booty, and Mrs. Sen, all of whom claim some cultural connection with the West. They represent what Ngugi wa Thing'o calls "colonial subjects" who "were expected to evaluate the world according to the way it was seen by Europeans, and so were presented with a 'distorted image' of themselves" ("Literature in Schools"; qtd in Boehmer 189). Such individuals live as doubly alienated characters of postcolonial nation-building projects in South Asia. Whereas they are living hybrid lives of colonial hangover, they are also equally concerned with transnational power relations in the contemporary global world, as reflected in the tussle between Lola and Mrs. Sen—

one with a daughter in Britain, the old colonial power and another with one in America, new superpower. Moreover, the postcolonial nation building project remained highly discriminatory, which was why the Gorkhaland movement that had arisen for the demands of the ethnic Nepalis to be identified as a separate nation within India has dislocated the likes of Lola and Noni, as other non-Nepalis in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong areas

Desai's depiction of the displacement and alienation of "others" such Biju and Lola/Noni is considered by critics as a misrepresentation of the Indian Nepalis and the Gorkhaland Movement. One of her detractors, Namrata Chaturvedi, has written that "for an outsider, who reads the novel, it is not difficult to construe any image of the Nepalis of India as unsophisticated and hopelessly vulnerable..." (The Inheritance of Stereotype" 2006). Sunaina Kumar has called it a formulaic novel with stock characters, the insider-outsider debate, mutual dependence and mutual suspicion, easy justification for patently unfair behaviour; the beauty of the countryside as contrasted with the acute poverty of the natives..." ("The Inheritance" 189). Kumar further writes that "Desai's seven years of research project does not seem to have resulted in a projection of the Nepalese agitation as both convincing and fair" (190).

The *Inheritance of Loss* is ultimately the narrative of India's troubling tryst with modernity, which is reflected by characters such as the cook, who are caught up with their immobile lives in their locations while dreaming for cosmopolitan mobility. His desire of connection with the wider world is reflected in his disappointment at knowing that Sai has

not come from any foreign country but from India itself. The cook represents the postcolonial loathing of one's own country in favor of a more global, developed West. The cook desires to adopt modernity which, for him, is reflected in "toaster ovens, electric shavers, watches, cameras, cartoon colors. He dreamed at night not in the Freudian symbols that still enmeshed others but in modern codes, the digits of a telephone flying away before he could dial them, a garbled television" (55). Moreover, through telling Sai fake stories of grand old days, he gets a sense of gratification and pride and tries to escape the reality of his life. He either dreams of a better life with Biju, either in America or India with a married Biju and a settled life, or tells the stories of greatness in the past, because his present is not worthy. He hates his present and lives either in the past or the future. The cook thus represents the failure of modern India, where the gap between the haves and the have-nots, the dreams and desires and promises of modern India have failed, and modern India is sandwiched between the glorious past and a promising future but a despicable present.

The consumer-driven society of the West, and the apparent failure of globalization to accommodate those from the lower strata of the society has led to disenfranchisement and dislocation of people all around the world. Pankaj Mishra, in his review of the book, has rightly pointed out that

> In fact, Desai's novel seems to argue that such multiculturalism, confined to the Western metropolis and academe, doesn't begin to address the causes of extremism and violence in the modern world. Nor, it suggests, can

> economic globalization become a route to prosperity for the downtrodden. (Mishra, “Wounded by the West”).

Biju’s life in America is that of a runaway migrant, disappearing each time his employer gets a pink form to do a green card check on his employees. In her critique of Desai’s depiction of transnational labor symptomatic of the neocolonial age, Oana Sabo writes that “Desai connects different geographies of migration and diaspora, showing that just as globalization creates new social and economic divides, it also enables migrants to challenge ethnic and social barriers by forging cross-cultural connections” (376). However, national identity trumps the idea of cosmopolitan belonging, as the political tussle between India and Pakistan seep into personal lives, as Biju finds that he “could not talk straight to the man; every molecule of him felt fake, every hair on him went on alert” (22). Biju’s hostility with the Pakistani “other,” despite befriending fellow immigrants of his similar status coming from places like Zanzibar, shows that the idea of cosmopolitan belonging is very much affected by one’s social background in the homeland. In this sense, Biju is not a true cosmopolitan figure, pre-occupied as he is with the notion of national identity even as he bonds with a fellow immigrant from Zanzibar and not the one from Pakistan. From this vantage point, *The Inheritance of Loss* shows how transnational migrant lives are shaped by the political issues back home. The end of the novel completes the journey of Biju as an immigrant back home, doubly disillusioned by both abroad and home. However, Biju’s disillusioned homecoming coincides with Sai’s possible leave-taking in a new quest. So the cycle of home and away depicts the repetitiveness of the cycle of disbelonging and alienation, and also hope.

This chapter attempted to examine how Kiran Desai has depicted the politics of identity and location symbolize postcolonial practices in nation-making in India. Desai's depiction of the Gorkhaland Movement for the creation of a separate homeland for the Indian Nepalis, thus, as depicted by Desai, is a problematic idea that leads to further alienation of several identity groups. Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* raises important questions of belonging and dislocation of characters belonging to different ethnic backgrounds, of who is mainstream and who is the "other" in the hill town of Kalimpong.

CHAPTER THREE

Homeland's Diasporas and Allegorical Cartography: Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography*

"Come home, stranger."

(*Kartography,* 332)

Who are the Muhajirs of Pakistan? Are they "Indian" migrants or diaspora? Are they refugees? Or have they been Pakistani residents long enough to now be considered natives? Or are they simply foreign guests who have overstayed? Answers to these questions may be both "yes" and "no" at the same time, according to who is answering them. While all these identity markers, which tend to overlap, partially explain the socio-political position of the Muhajirs in Pakistan, they are still inadequate to fully grasp their sense of alienation and dislocation. The overlapping nature of these categories means that the foremost challenge is to find possible ways of understanding the identity of the Muhajirs so as to be able to address their question of belonging in Pakistan. Kamila Shamsie's novel, *Kartography* (2002), depicts the alienation and dislocation of Karachi's Muhajirs, focusing on how discourses of citizenship and nationalism in Pakistan have failed to engender a sense of belonging in its citizens and communities. Shamsie's novel dwells on three major themes: the Muhajir Quaumi Movement in the 1980s and the 1990s that sent Karachi into disarray with violent ethnic clashes and establishment of a parallel state; the need to accommodate differences and foster a sense of belonging among citizens of the country; and the memory of 1971 and its effect on the later generation that came to

question the attitudes and values of the earlier one vis-a-vis the question of national identity.

Shamsie in her novel emphasizes on the politics of place-making, critical questioning of Pakistan's historiography through a prospective cartographic revitalization of Karachi. Such revitalization, Shamsie shows, is possible through an interactive, allegorical map that builds on narrativization, memorialization and collective imagining and ownership of the city by its residents. This in turn foregrounds the possibility of multiple subjectivities in creating a shared space of belonging, and re-interpreting the idea of a popular Pakistani nationalism that is accommodative not only of "mainstream" but also "marginal" imaginings of the city and the nation. Shamsie interrogates what home means in a country that was carved out of India to form a homeland the subcontinent's Muslim population as the new citizens and the old ones found themselves struggling to stake a claim in the nation.

The Muhajirs' disenchantment with the failed promises of an ideal homeland in Pakistan, and their attempts to revitalize those promises through violent and non-violent means have been fictionalized by Pakistani writers in both Urdu and English languages. Among Urdu writers, arguably the most well known is Intizar Hussein, whose novel *Basti* (1979) ("Settlement," translated into English as *Basti*, New York Review of Books, 1995) explores the issues of displacement and migration through the lives of individuals who witness the twin partitions of the Indian subcontinent, in 1947 and in 1971. Another novel of Hussein's, titled *Aage Samandar Hai* (translated into English as *The Sea Lies Ahead*;

Harper Perennial, 2015) situates Muhajirs as a displaced ethnic group living in Karachi, considering them as metaphorically and literally homeless and without a scope for further advancement.[12] Writers of the younger generation have shown renewed interest in interrogating the issues pertaining to the failure of the Pakistani state to hold itself as a nation, which was manifested in the secession of East Pakistan, leading to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. These writers are not only questioning the failure of the Pakistani nation-state in maintaining its integrity, but also the deliberate attempt to erase that historical event from the narrative of the nation. Some of the fictional texts that question both the integrity of the nation as well as the longstanding amnesia include Moshin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2002), Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography* (2002), Moni Moshin's *The End of Innocence* (2006), Sorayya Khan's *Noor* (2006), Durdana Soomro and Ghazala Hameed's *Bengaal Raag* (2006), and Shahbano Bilgrami's *Without Dreams* (2007).

Shamsie has consistently represented contemporary Pakistan, especially depicting her characters' complex relationships with the city of Karachi, the city which represents the failure of the most audacious plan in terms of city-making and also nation building. Her fist four novels—*In the City by the Sea* (1998), *Salt and Saffron* (2000), *Kartography* (2002) and *Broken Verses* (2005)—are distinctly "Karachi novels"Engulfed in violence

12 The phrase "the sea lies ahead" was presumably used by General Ayub Khan as a warning to the Muhajirs during an election campaign, asking them not to support Fatima Jinnah, his rival. As TCA Raghavan explains, "In those three words was a dual message: that the muhajirs had nowhere else to go once they had migrated to Pakistan and that they had their back to the sea in a population of indigenous Sindhis, Punjabis, Baluchis and Pathans."

and ethnic conflict, one of the most populated and vibrant megacities of the global South, Karachi is, in Shamsie's own words, "too complicated for anyone to know all its subtexts" ("On Leaving and Returning to Karachi") and her attitude to the city is similar to the "the way that you love that difficult member of your family" ("Reimagining a Violent City"). As Bruce King writes, "A central theme of Kamila Shamsie's novels is the emotional discomfort that results from leaving the security of the past, a past represented by home, family, friendships and Karachi" ("Kamila Shamsie's Novels of History, Exile and Desire" 147).

Kartography, Shamsie's third novel, depicts the struggle of Muhajirs, the Urdu-speaking Bihari migrant community in Pakistan, claiming their native status in Pakistan many decades after they settled in the country they considered their Muslim "homeland" during partition. The novel deals with issues of dislocation and identity crisis, portraying a crisis of identity among characters who are divided between the binary identities of "insider" against "outsider," "native" against "migrant." Having migrated in the wake of the Partition, the Muhajirs came under constant pressure to assert their belongingness to the country, even after decades of living in Pakistan. The sense of displacement and loss of the Muhajirs is represented through Zafar, who asserts his Pakistani identity during the tension during the 1980's when the Muhajir claims for identity is at its peak: "Muhajirs came here leaving everything behind. Our homes, families, our way of life...we came here to be Pakistani, not to be Sindhi" (Shamsie, Kartography 223-224). How do the Muhajirs negotiate this interstitiality of being both a "Pakistani" and an "outsider" at the same time? Can Karachi, or Pakistan for that matter, ever become a "home" for the Muhajirs?

How many generations will it be before Muhajirs are finally unburdened of the “Indian” tag and accepted “natives” of Pakistan?

Muslim homeland and the Muhajirs

When the Indian nationalist movement against British colonialism was at its peak, there was a parallel debate, frequently interspersing with the nationalist movement, on idea of India as a nation. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in his 1940 presidential address to the Muslim league, laid out the “two-nation” theory, asserting that

> Islam and Hinduism are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but in fact different and distinct social orders, and it is only a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality.... To yoke together two such nations under a single state ... must lead to a growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state. (Jinnah, “The Muslim League’s Resolution”)

The idea of Pakistan as a separate country was floated on the basis of the claims that Muslims formed a different “nation” within India, and that they could not live together with a formidable Hindu population. The annual meeting passed a resolution, demanding that “the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in majority...should be grouped to constitute “independent states” in which the Constituent Units shall be autonomous and sovereign” (Jinnah “The Muslim League’s Resolution”). The demand for a Muslim homeland grew in the subsequent years, with Jinnah spearheading a Muslim separatist movement. The Bihar riot of 1946, which caused 30,000 deaths as claimed by the Muslim League gave a final push towards the translation of the two-nation theory into reality.

(Ghosh, “Changing Discourse” 58). The two-nation theory finally saw its culmination in August 1947, when India was partitioned to create a new Muslim homeland, called Pakistan. Various estimates have put the number of deaths from 230,000 to one million, and the number of refugees up to ten million, although these figures have been disputed (Hasan, “Memories of a Fragmented Nation” 2663).

While the Pakistani leaders, including Jinnah, initially tried to maintain Pakistan as a secular nation, as they had become aware of the dangers of the projection of one community against another, it started to dawn that the two-nation theory that formed the basis of India’s partition would translate into multiple-nation theory in the case of Pakistan, as various ethnic assertions and dissensions started to arise in the following decades. The two-nation theory which propagated India-Pakistan divide was highly flawed, while it took into consideration the differences of Hindus and Muslims, the theory largely ignored the diversity within these two religious communities that included various ethnic groups. According to Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, “the deployment of Islam as the central tenet of Pakistani nationalism managed to neither curb the forces of regionalism nor piece together the most rudimentary form of a democratic political system” (202).[13]Adeel Khan, in this book *Politics of Identity* deals with this issue of complex identities and self-assertion. He writes,

13 Bose and Jalal are quick to point out that Pakistan is not the only country facing such problems, as “secular and democratic India has displayed many of the same stresses and strains during the eighties and nineties” (202) but that India has done “only marginally better than authoritarian and Islaimic Pakistan in preventing the recurrence of regional dissidence” (203).

> One of the serious challenges that the State of Pakistan has been confronted with since its creation in 1947 is the self-assertion of various ethnic groups. Out of the initial five ethnic groups—Bengalis, Punjabis, Pukhtun, Sindhis, and Baloch—four have actively contested the legitimacy of the administrative structure of the state, with one, the Bengalis, succeeding in breaking away and creating their own state, Bangladesh. (15)

Another community that emerged in such a gray area was that of the Muhajirs, who amplified their claims as a distinct "nation" in the early 1980s and the 1990s as they were confronted with the prospect of dislocation owing to the growing influence of other ethnic communities in Pakistan. Muhajirs are the Urdu-speaking Pakistanis who had migrated mainly from the Bihar and Uttar Pradesh states of India in the wake of the partition of India in 1947. The term "Muhajir" has undergone transformation in the decades after it was first used post-partition, in that it initially denoted all migrants from Indian to Pakistan, but later it started to mean only the Urdu-speaking Bihari Muslims settled in Sindh.[14] The term was initially used to allude to the migration of the first Muslims from Mecca to Medina—a migration initiated by the Prophet himself—thus imbuing the (often forced) displacements to Pakistan with a specifically religious significance and likening them to a pilgrimage (Kumar "Karachi as Home" 163). The labeling of the immigrants with a sanctified term was inspired by the need to integrate the newcomers as citizens in the host society. Since Pakistan was touted as the holy land of Muslims, it was natural for the rulers of the newly independent state to try to foster a sense of sanctity to the

14 Those migrating from other parts of India were known by their previous regional identities, such as Gujaratis and Punjabis. A clear distinction was thus made between the Muhajirs and other migrants. For more, see Ghosh, "Changing Discourse."

migration which legitimized the creation of the new state. Other terms used to identify the Muhajirs include “Muhajireen” or “Panahgureen” or even “Hindustani” (Siddiqi 97).

As identity politics became prominent in the late 1950s, the term Muhajir also started to be understood in the pejorative sense. The changing meaning of the term “Muhajir” from its allusions to Islamic concept of hijrat to a pejorative term to mean an outsider hints at the way the identity and place of the Indian migrants changed in the decades following the establishment of Pakistan. As Priya Kumar explains, the moniker Muhajir also shifted from being an all-embracing term for migrants to an abusive word (like Hindustani) that referred to the migrants’ Indian past (Kumar, “Karachi as Home” 163). The transformation of the meaning of the term from sacrosanct to pejorative reflects the way in which Muhajirs were initially welcomed and later discriminated against as “outsiders” in Pakistan, especially in Karachi.One of the reasons for such a transformation was the concentrated influx of Muhajirs in Karachi, which caused what may be called a population explosion; in 1947, the population of Karachi was less than half a million, and it had grown to a staggering 1.1 million by 1951 (Anwar 6), turning it into a what is popularly called a “Muhajir city,” set apart from the autochthonous Sindhis who dominated its hinterland (Anwar 9). By 1981, the population of Karachi totaled 5.4 million, of which Muhajirs constituted 61 percent, Punjabi percent, Pathan 11 percent, Sindhi 7 percent, and Baloch 5 percent.[15] The population explosion proved disastrous to

15 Data published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics show that urban Sindh, which more or less covers Karachi, had a population of 1,768,127 in 1951, which rose to 8,243,036 in 1981. The last census, conducted in 1998, shows the urban population of Sindh at 14,839,662 persons. Area & Population of Administrative Units by

the urban planning of the city, and hence, Karachi developed into an ever-expanding, unorganized landscape, that became a breeding space for violence, land-grabbing and ethnic disputes. So much so that it became impossible to create an authoritative map of the ever expanding city, the fact which is alluded to in the cartographic project in *Kartography*. According to Shamsie, "Karachi feels that it is generating income but isn't getting a fair amount back, and the rest of Sindh feels that it is underdeveloped because economic and political power are concentrated in Karachi. Such wrangling gets played in ethnic terms" (Chambers, "Comparative Approach" 219).

Karachi and Hyderbad were the main cities which saw an unexpected influx of migrants from India. The Sindh province, particularly the urban centres such as Karachi, received 20 percent of Muhajirs, who were able to maintain a distinct ethnic and linguistic identity and present themselves as a formidable political and cultural force in a place from where the non-Muslim population had migrated to India. The Muhajirs were well represented in the army and the bureaucracy, their language, Urdu, was declared the national language, their leader, Liaquat Ali Khan made the first prime minister, and the city which they were gradually dominating made the capital of the new country.

There is little doubt that it was Muslims of UP and Bihar who had been the most active in the movement for Pakistan. No wonder then that after the formation of Pakistan, they were the ones who were represented most favourably in Pakistani political and bureaucratic systems. The Muhajirs, who were better educated than other ethnic groups,

Rural./Urban: 1951-1998 Censuses. For more on the rise of Karachi as a migrant city, see Verkaaik, *A People of Migrants*; Verkaaik, *Migrants and Militants*.

especially as compared to the Sindhis, who populated the rural parts of Sindh, took up important positions in the government and also dominated financial sectors. Their facility with Urdu, the national language, better access to education and engagement in financial sectors gave them an edge over the native Sindhis who still stuck with feudal modes of production. So much so that the Sindhis, who considered themselves autocthonic residents of Sindh, began to feel marginalized. According to Muhammad Abrar Zahoor because of Sindh's inclusion in Pakistan, "Sindhis lost their 'homeland' to the new Muslim state and they were reduced to refugee status with no territory which they could call their own or to which they could identify in cultural terms" ("Migration, Settlement and Identity" 170). Alarmed with the growing influence of the Muhajirs, the Sindhis then started to present themselves as "sons of the soil," against the recently migrated Muhajirs, whom they considered as outsiders who were reaping undue shares in Karachi.

Subsequent governments in Pakistan and the province of Sindh, represented by Sindhi and Punjabi leaders, introduced policies favoring the Sindhi and Punjabi population and discriminating against the Muhajirs. The Muhajir domination of Karachi started to weaken only in the late 1950s and the 1960s when Ayub Khan, a Pathan, came to power and shifted the capital to Islamabad, which resulted in the migration of the Muhajir bureaucrats to the new capital, a migration generally considered as the "second migration." Moreover, the adoption of Sindhi alongside Urdu as the official language of Sindh, and the quota system aimed at loosening the grip of the Muhajirs in the bureaucracy, brought the Muhajirs and the Sindhis in direct confrontation (Siddiqi, *Politics of Ethnicity* 98). The Muhajirs thus experienced double disenchantment in their new homeland as they were considered Indians because of their Indian past, whereas they

already considered India as an enemy nation because they were now citizens of Pakistan. While Sindhis and Pathans take recourse to the idea of autochthony to claim bigger stakes in the social and political spheres, Muhajirs put forward the logic that the very inception of Pakistan was for accommodating Indian Muslims. It is important to note that the Muslims from the united provinces (present day Uttar Pradesh), where they were in minority, as opposed to the Muslim majority provinces in North-West India (present day Pakistan), shaped the struggle for the independence of Pakistan (Siddiqi 6). Hence the Muhajirs' cliaim that they were the rightful citizens for whom the new country of Pakistan was created. As Papiya Ghosh explains, the position of the Muhajir Qaumi Movement is that the label "refugee" / panahguzeen[16] does not apply to Muhajirs, since they are in Pakistan as its "makers" and not to take refuge. Ultimately, a section of the Karachi Muhajirs ultimately started an often violent movement, known as the Muhajir Qaumi Movement (later renamed as Muttahida Qaumi Movement),[17] in the mid 1980s, which turned Karachi into a violent city with three thousand deaths a year.[18] One of the

16 Urdu term for "refugee."

17 The term "Muhajir" was later renamed "Muttahida" by the MQM to accommodate other migrant populations, mostly for the purpose of electoral politics. According to Papiya Ghosh, the MQM, in September 2000, shared a London platform with Baluch, Pashtoon and Sindhi leaders who have formed the Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement, which proposes to rebuild a new Pakistan on the basis of the Lahore Resolution of 1940. (Ghosh, "Changing Discourse" 63-64)

18 For a detailed analysis of the disenchantment of the Muhajirs, see Priya Kumar and Rita Kothari, "Sindh, 1947 and Beyond," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*,

demands of the Muhajirs was that they be considered a fifth nationality of Pakistan and given employment in government services on proportional basis in terms of their population (Siddiqi 101).

Kartography begins in the year 1986, with the growing violence in Karachi in the wake of the Muhajir Qaumi Movement as its backdrop. The novel's protagonists are Raheen and Karim, whose relationship with each other borders on love and incest, as Raheen calls Karim as "my best friend, my one-time crib companion, blood-brother (or spit-brother; sputum being the fluid we chose to mingle in a cup and ingest)" (15). Their friendship is termed as fated, as their two sets of parents are life-long friends who have weathered the political climate of Karachi although they belong to different ethnic communities, the only things connecting them being their upper-class status and an unwavering faith in their friendship. Raheen's father, Zafar, is a Muhajir; her mother, Yashmin, a Pathan. Karim's father, Ali, is a Punjabi; his mother, Maheen, a Bengali. Though they are of mixed ethnic and cultural heritage, they claim their belonging with either of their parents —Raheen identifies herself as a Muhajir and Karim, a Bengali. There are other Sindhi characters in the novels, such as Raheen's and Karim's common friend, Zia and their parents' common friends, Uncle Asif and Aunty Laila. Raheen and Karim are teenagers, whose school has shut down owing to the escalating violence in the city, and are being packed off to Uncle Asif's farmhouse out of the city. Initially, Aunty Maheen's question as to when the city "will learn" (9), as they prepare to send their children appears to be the drawing room worry of an upper-class woman, but as the story unfolds, showing what

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Maheen has gone through in the past, it becomes clearer that Maheen has genuine worries about the problems in the city. The novel also has parallel story that happens in the distant past, in the early 1971 during the tumultuous year in Pakistan's history, when Zafar and Maheen, and Ali and Yashmin had been engaged with one another. Their engagement had been broken in the run up to the event of 1971, when Pakistan's eastern wing broke away to form a different country, Bangladesh. A detailed examination of the break up of the engagements of the two couples will follow later in this chapter.

Initially, Raheen and Karim assume that they can at least have some kind of control over their own lives when they realize that they cannot have control over what is happening in their city and the country. Karim is bothered by the violence engulfing the city, although at this point, he cannot fathom what it is exactly that is wrong with things in Karachi. But he is aware that his and Raheen's being away in the farmhouse when Karachi is burning would not change the hostile political climate in Karachi. His annoyance at being kept away from the city is evident in his comment about his father: "He thinks changing locations can alter things...but when we go back nothing will have changed" (19). The world, for him, is like a jigsaw puzzle, and he wants to solve it to understand it in a larger context, somewhat as an abstraction. Whereas, for Raheen, no matter the violence that defines the city, Karachi still feels safe, and most importantly, home. Later, as violence escalates in Karachi, Karim moves to London with his parents, who eventually separate. Although Karim and Raheen remain in touch, they gradually grow distant from one another.

Kartography invokes the classic debate between two modes of mapmaking popularized by the cartographers, Strabo and Eratosthenes. Whereas geometric cartography presents an objective overview of the city in terms of lines and borders (Eratosthenes), narrative cartography imagines a city through storytelling, anecdotes and an individual's sense of attachment to a place (Strabo). The novel dwells on this dialectic as Raheen and Karim both attempt in their own ways to understand the contemporary socio-political situation in Karachi and to define what belonging to a place entails. For Karim, the reality that stories of Karachi tell are unbearable, and it is difficult to decide which story you want to pay attention to and which one to turn away from. Instead, a map would define the city as a single territorial unit, give a sense of connectedness, and help you see beyond the tiny circle you live in, to acknowledge that you are part of something larger (244). This is also echoed by the French novelist Michel Houllebecq when he says that "the map is more interesting than the territory because it is an idealized simplification of a complex and often depressing reality" (Houllebecq, *La Carte et Le Territoire*, 82; qtd in Caquard, "Cartography-1" 7). Karim believes in this, to see things from a distance so that one could have a bird's eye view of reality. For him, the enterprise of map making helps one understand the complex post-Partition history Pakistan, and Karachi in particular. Karim obsesses over cartography as a way of having some kind of understanding and control over his own fate as well of Karachi, and wants evolve his amateur map-making skills into professional, so that he can create a proper map of Karachi, "[not] just one of those two-page things that you see in tourist books, but a real, proper map of the whole city" (66).

Contrary to Karim, Raheen sees no point in creating a map of one's own city, as she believes that it is only outsiders who need a map. An insider, she affirms, knows the city's subtexts through one's subjective experiences, anecdotes and allegories, and not through the geometric symmetry of cartography. Raheen believes in Strabo's argument that "Homer depicted geographical truths in the language of poetry" and that "Odysseus's voyage was as valid a source for map-making as the charts of travelers who had actually set sail themselves" (Kumar "Karachi" 174). She reminds Karim that before Eratosthenes "removed Homer, and all other poets, from the corpus of cartography," maps were used for illustrating stories and "helping someone hear the heartbeat of a place" (Shamsie 164, qtd in Kumar 174). Raheen says,

> Eratosthenes, the grandfather of cartography, was the first man to make a distinction between scientific and literary mapping. Prior to Eratosthenes, no one ever said that cartography should concern itself with science and facts rather than stories; the distinction didn't really exist. The Odyssey was considered as a valuable tool of mapping as were the charts and eyewitness accounts of sailors and travelers. But Eratosthenes' decision removed Homer, and all other poets, from the corpus of cartography. (180)

Raheen further tells about the allegorical utility of maps in the times of Homer:

> In the times of Homer, "maps weren't used for travel. They were mainly used for illustrating stories. There stands Mount Olympus. That's where Theseus fought Minotaur. That kind of stuff. So maps weren't about going from point A to B; they were about helping someone hear the heartbeat of a place." (180).

So when Karim engages in mapmaking, Raheen she does not see why anyone should alienate himself from theplace by making a map of that place and giving it names. She says,

> So what need was there for him to call the road by its official name, when he'd had no part in the naming, when he had no memories stored in the curves of its official consonants? We should have stories in common...We should have stories, and jokes no one understands, and memories that we know will stay alive because neither of us will let the other forget. (61)

For Raheen, therefore, stories and memories represent places in the city through which she connects herself. Those stories and memories help the residents share an ethics of belonging.

The city and its "others"

The politics of spatiality is an important aspect of the politics of home and belonging for the native "Other" as against the emigrant, for whom, as Rushdie has offers in "Imaginary Homelands," the construction of home is a psychological exercise in the domain of memory. He says that immigrants like him create their homes through their memory, and the memory of each individual contributes to the imagination of multiple ideas of the homeland—what he calls many Indias of the mind. As the case of the native "Other" suggests, the narrative construction of home does not seem to be an option, troubled as s/he is with the immediate need to make authoritative claims of home, metaphorical as well as literal. Such is the paradox that the native "other" has to find his/her "home" at *home* itself. This paradox explains the condition the alienation and dislocation of the

Muhajir community. As Agnieszka Sadecka explains, the Muhajirs "continued to be labeled as newcomers in the country long after Partition. And the resentment of the locals toward Muhajirs has long simmered under the illusion of a peaceful coexistence" (Sadecka 7). *Kartography* highlights such kind of persistent trauma of being identified as "outsiders" or "others" faced by Muhajir inhabitants of Karachi in spite of the fact that they are Pakistanis and have no affiliation whatsoever with their former homeland.

The question of the native as an "outsider" in terms of the politics of place is an important trope in *Kartography*. Apart from the idea of home a state of mind, the characters also debate the question of home as a physical space in which they exercise their claims of belonging. One such instance when Raheen becomes aware of her position as an "other" in Karachi is when she overhears her father and Uncle Asif engage in a heated debate on land reform. Uncle Asif, the "decadent feudal," claims his belonging and loyalty to land in terms of autochthony, claiming that the opinion of Muhajirs such as Zafar's on the need for land reform is proof that the latter have no sense of attachment to land. He says, "Muhajirs will never understand the way we feel about land. They all left their homes at Partition. No understanding of ties to a place" (39). Contrary to the feudalistic attitude of Uncle Asif, Zafar's opinion is based on the socialist philosophy of judicious distribution of land. Zafar's opinion represents, according to the Sindhi narrative, the lack of attachment to land among Muhajirs, hence their position as an "other" in the Sindhi homeland. Uncle Asif's wife, Aunty Laila also expresses a similar diatribe against the Muhajirs whom she sees as unwanted guests in her homeland. She says,

> Karachi is *my* home...Why did those bloody Muhajirs have to go and form a political group? […] coming across the border thinking we should be grateful for their presence […] Do you hear the way people like Zafar and Yashmin talk about "their Karachi"? My family lived [in Karachi] for generations. Who the hell are these Muhajirs to pretend it's *their* city! (40-41)

Raheen is alarmed to see the narrow the native versus outsider debate they are subjected to, in terms of the claim of authenticity and belonging to land. She says,

> When my father spoke of the need for land reforms to break the power of the feudals, he lost his customary languid posture and his soft voice took on an edge of urgency. Even at thirteen, I could link his fervour to myriad reasons. The socialist professor who set his mind ablaze when he was at university; the capitalist profession he had entered when he started his own advertizing agency; the novels he read; the stories he'd heard from employees and perspective employees who left their villages to come to the city, and were willing to do anything at all to earn a living in Karachi, anything to go back to 'that life'; his analysis of economic reports; his mistrust of humanity's capacity to be uncorrupted by power...Yet Uncle Asif had summarily dismissed all that with one word: Muhajir (39-40).

The question of place, thus, becomes important in the narrative construction of home and belonging. Rosemary Marangoli George stresses that "homes/nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered "not home", with the foreign, with distance" (George, *Politics of Home* 4). What is it that makes a place one's "home" and

another's "not home"? What is it that makes a place belong to one community over another? Who has the rightful claim to a place? Is it nativity in terms of autochthonic claims or the narratives one creates of belonging to a place? As mentioned earlier, if it is the myth of origin that defines a nation, as many would argue, then Muhajirs are the most original people of Pakistan, as it was created to serve as home for India's Muslims. Most of the Biharis who had settled in Karachi—ultimately being labeled as Muhajirs—had migrated hoping that Pakistan would unconditionally welcome the Muslims of India, who were considered to be at the margins of the nation. But for those intent on creating the insider/outsider divide, questions of autochthony and territoriality become more viable to claim their nationhood. As Cara Cilano rightly points out, "For Asif, national identity depends wholly upon the land itself, not the idea of the national that eventually takes concrete shape through territorialization" (*Contemporary Pakistani Fiction* 37).

It is important to remember that the Bihari Muslims who migrated to India did not face much resistance in the initial years of the formation of Pakistan. It was only a decade of living together that the Sindhis began to express their antagonisms against the Muhajirs. Uncle Asif's lamentation that the Muhajirs, by virtue of their being better educated, took up opportunities earlier available to Sindhis, is symptomatic of the Sindhi attitude towards the Muhajirs:

> Poor Karachiites. Living in this spacious, clean, city in '47 when—whap! —Partition happens and all these immigrants come streaming across the new border, convinced of the superiority of their culture, and whisk away all the best jobs from Sindhis who'd been living here for generations. (223)

This statement of Asif corroborates with the longstanding claim of the Sindhis that they are the original inhabitants of Karachi, as against the Muhajirs who migrated to the city after Partition. Raheen's father, Zafar, takes recourse to the partition narrative to defend his claim as an authentic citizen of Pakistan, the promised homeland of Indian Muslims. Thus, Zafar contends that the Muhajirs are not to be blamed for what the Sindhis have lost, as the Muhajirs themselves, having left their homes have lost many things to become what they are now: Pakistanis in Karachi. He says,

> Muhajirs came here leaving everything behind. Our homes, families, our way of life. We can't be blamed if some—mind you, *some*—of us came from areas with education system that made us qualified for office jobs instead of latrine-cleaning which is the kind of job you seem to think immigrants should be doing. And for the term *immigrants*... (223; original emphasis)

Zafar hints at the continuing trauma of being identified as immigrants in Pakistan even if the Muhajir narrative equated their migration with that of the "Muslims of Mecca who had migrated to Medina with the prophet" (224). Significantly, both the parties to conflict —the Muhajirs and the Sindhis—take recourse to the rhetoric of "home" to establish their claims of belonging in Karachi. While Sindhi characters in the novel, such as Asif and Laila, present their case on the basis of autochthony, Muhajirs claim that the very idea of the foundation of Pakistan was to create a separate nation for India's Muslims, which automatically makes people like Zafar the most authentic citizens of Pakistan. For Muhajirs, the migration to the "homeland" for Muslims of the subcontinent does not represent a simple case of "leaving home" for another territory but in fact the entry into

another, arguably more genuine, “home” made especially according to their needs. But their “foreignness” lingers along with their identity for generations to come. Zafar asserts that he “must have heard my parents say a thousand times “we came here to be Pakistani, not to be Sindhi” (223-4). The same question troubles Raheen as she contemplates on what it is that determines one’s nativity against another’s foreignness. She ruminates on what it is that that distinguishes a native from an immigrant or how long one needs to have stayed at a place to “upgrade” from immigrant to native. She asks, “What kind of an immigrant is born in a city and spends his whole life there, gets married there, and raises his daughter there? And I, an immigrant’s daughter, was an immigrant too” (41). Through Raheen and her father, Zafar, the novel thus captures the alienation and marginalization of Muhajirs (Kumar, “Karachi as Home” 171). Whereas for the diasporic individual home is some place in a geographical location that s/he has left behind or remains in memory, the idea of home for the “native other” is the “here and now,” and has to claim his/her belonging in the present home. Thus for the diasporic individual, home is a memory; for the “native other,” home is geographical location of the present. Diaspora and migrant identites are based on travel or movement, the case of the “native other” is one of immobility or the willingness to settle down rather than move. For the native “other,” the past may have been left behind, but wherever they are, their attempt is to make a new home and claim a homeland for themselves.

The longing for home begins to dissipate with each passing generation, as each successive generation tends to have fewer memories of the homeland. According to K Satchidanandan, the experience of the second or third generation migrant is different from

that of the first generation migrant in terms of their considerations of home. For the first generation migrant, home is a real physical or geographical entity with memories of the personal experience of habitation; for the second and third generation migrant, home becomes an unreal concept, and remains “just a space of imagination rather than of nostalgic recollection” ("That Third Space” 54).

It is because of the desire not to go unnoticed that the “native other” gains agency, becomes prominent. In the case of second- and third-generation Muhajirs, their sense of loss and displacement vis-a-vis the memory of old homeland is an anomaly, unlike in the case of the first generation Muhajirs. For the second and third generation Muhajirs, what is important is the need to be at home in the present, here and now rather than then and there, in terms not only of the sense of belonging but also their political participation in their present home. While the position of the Indian diaspora in the West may be that of a silent minority, the case of the Muhajirs is different in that they have not only attempted to forge a collective identity on the basis of a common loss of home but of the potential to “make” home in the present home, and they have articulated such desires through both electoral as well as violent means. Rather than remaining a silent minority, the “native other” presents itself as a “political” minority claiming space in the political affairs of the nation-state.

In her article, “This place is now your home,” Agnizeszka Sadecka stresses that “Both Raheen and Karim feel like Karachiites, but as third-generation migrants, they bear the memory of other places, that were the homelands of their parents” (Sadecka 8). She

further writes that, unlike their parents, they refuse to look back at the lands they left behind. They consider their cities as a promise, as a place where they will be able to bring up their children and grow old there. Maheen, when her husband mentions a possibility of emigrating says, “if we leave here I’ll spend my whole time missing people in Karachi because there are so, so, many to miss that you can’t just squeeze in all that missing during your morning cup of tea” (103). Like Maheen, her son Karim represents the minority Bengali population that was left stranded in the Western part of Pakistan when the Eastern part of the country broke away to form a separate nation of Bangladesh. Karim, however, is a misfit in Karachi, as his story does not fit into the dominant narrative, thus leading him to think of himself as a permanent stranger. Karim has always thought of himself being a temporary resident of Karachi, as he cannot associate his Bengaliness in Karachi. He views the city as a rational observer, as a stranger even, as he is preparing himself mentally to leave the city for London with his parents. Karim comes across as genuinely concerned with what is happened in the city, especially in the poorer parts. He says, “Don’t you think maybe there’s something wrong in us having such fun all the time when people are being killed every day in the poorer parts of town?” (63). Zia responds: “This is Karachi. We have a good time while we can, ’cause tomorrow we might not be so lucky’” (63). Karim’s attachment to Karachi is so emotional and organic that the thought of leaving the city, for him, is almost like dying:

> I’ve already started thinking of Karachi as a place that I have to say goodbye to; every day I say goodbye to some part of it and then two days later I see that part again and I feel so relieved but also not because then I have to say goodbye to it again. This must be what dying is like. (75).

His apprehension of his status as an outsider in the city escalates when his parents divorce, which is why his relationship with Karachi grows more and more distant as he lives abroad. When the Muhajir car thief asks his ethnicity upon his return to Karachi, Karim responds by saying that he is a Bengali. Raheen is left wondering why Karim has chosen to identify himself with his mother's ethnicity. She meditates:

> Was he trying to imply that he existed outside the landscape of post-Civil War ethnic politics? Or was it that he felt it wiser not to associate himself with an ethnic group that this (car thief) saw as a competitor or oppressor —easier to say you belonged to those who had broken away twenty-five years earlier and who no one ever spoke of anymore?" (176)

For Raheen, however, Karachi represents home—although she is made to question her own belief time and again—and that her identity is that of a Karachiite even as she is a Muhajir. Raheen says: "Who among us has never been moved to tears, or to tears' invisible counterparts, by mention of the word "'home"? Is there any other word that can feel so heavy as you hold it in your mouth?" (63). She knows no other home, although she has already started to understand as a teenager that something is wrong with being a Muhajir in the city. She asks herself, "What is it that makes a place feel like home, even when it is entirely removed from the neighbourhood you've grown up in? Is it merely some trick of the mind, an illusion of connectedness?" (165).

In Shamsie's later novel, *Burnt Shadows*, her protagonist Hiroko, a Japanese woman, steps out of Nagasaki after the loss of her home and relatives in the bombing, to find a home in the world. She adopts the larger world as her home, in which Japan, her

homeland, is only a part that could remain in memory. The death of her lover and her father leave her without a home in Nagasaki, which is why she has to consider the outside world as her home. Nevertheless, the sentimental connection to one's land remains in one form or another, which is reflected in her conversation with Ilse, her lover's sister, when she says,

> 'Do you see those flowers on that hillside, Ilse? I want to know their names in Japanese. I want to hear Japanese. I want tea that tastes the way tea should taste in my understanding of tea. I want to look like the people around me.' (Shamsie, *Burnt Shadows* 99)

But then Hiroko is also capable of making herself at home in Delhi, and when she later migrates to Pakistan, in Karachi. In Karachi, even when she meets many Japanese friends regularly, she is not able to tell them of the "birds" on her back, the burn marks that were inflicted on her during the bombing. However, she can tell the same to her Karachi friends:

> Considering it now, she decided the day she knew her life had tilted into feeling 'at home' in Karachi was when she found she was able to tell her neighbourhood friends that she had lived through the bombing of Nagasaki, while still insisting to the Japanese women that, although she grew up there, she was in Tokyo when the bomb fell. (Shamsie, *Burnt Shadows* 140-141).

Nagasaki, for her, becomes an unfamiliar terrain once it becomes unrecognizable in terms of its physical outlook. Moreover, her sense of disbelonging is aggravated by the fact that her father, and her lover, are killed in the bombing. So, for Hiroko, the loss of her

personal attachment with her loved ones, and also the loss of her location, make her feel dislocated at her own home and makes her venture into a journey to find her lover's relatives. What Shamsie foregrounds in *Burnt Shadows* is an idea of home that defies definition. The moment you atttempt to explain what home means, it loses its meaning. What is home for someone like Raja Husseini, Hiroko's son and a quintessential travel between languages and locations? Raja finds himself unable to ask his driver what home means for his people, because himself cannot explain what it means. Raza "... knew how to ask where someone was from, or where they lived, [but] the word for 'home' in Pashto eluded him. As he tried to think of ways to explain it, the meaning receded" (Shamsie 2009, 334). What is home for actual nomads who consider no place as a fixed home but find themselves at home everywhere they go?

In *Kartography*, even as Karim is leaving Karachi, he wants to make sense of the place. he wants to leave his signature in the form of a map. So, he continues to draw a map, "Looking at streets, and whispering street names when we drove past road signs, and drawing a map of the route we were taking from his house to the airport..." (110). Even as he calls Karachi home, he is acutely aware of his existence as an outsider because of his ethnic identity. He tells Raheen,

> You want to hear the heartbeat of a place? Do you know how hard your heart beats when you're lost? Do you know what it is to wander out of the comfort of your own streets and your own stories?...Which stories do you want me to pay attention to? Or, more to the point, which stories have you deliberately turned away from, [Raheen], and why? (181)

Ethnic differences imposed by external forces of the society tend to disrupt the friendship between Raheen and Karim. Raheen further contempates about the ethnic differences that has become part of one's existence in Karachi:

> I was forced to consider that Karim and I were separate in some way that seemed to matter terribly to people old enough to understand where significance lay...I was a Muhajir with a trace of Pathan, and he was Bengali and ...Punjabi? Sindhi? What? I considered. Probalby Punjabi, I decided...These days, with the Civil War treated as a long-distant memory that had nothing to do with our present lives, his Punjabiness would probably be more of an issue on the nation's ethnic battleground that his Bengaliness. But did any of it really have anything to do with Karim and me? Did differing ethnicities mean that there was something fundamentally disparate about us at the core? (43-44).

However, the most crucial factor escalating the growing distance between Raheen and Karim is how, as grownups, they view each other with suspicion regarding each other's concern for the Pakistani society, both being situated at the margins of the nation. Raheen relentlessly tries to find the stranger element in Karim, observing his mannerisms when Karim returns from England, but is surprised to see that Karim still retains the Pakistani traits in the way he hugs Zia:

> ...he still hugs men like a real Pakistani, none of this let's-pretend-there's-nothing-intimate-about-our-physical-contact that so many American boys, and also so many Karachi bous who'd been watching too much America and

> too little Pakistan, were guilty of when thy slapped and punched each other in greeting (156).

Her expectation of seeing Karim as a tourist does not end there. When Zia blows his horn at a beggar and swerves right across him, Raheen observes that "Karim didn't react, though I had expected him to have a moment of tourist horror" (161). Raheen's attempt to examine the outsider position of Karim is in fact a reflection of her own longing to belong to Karachi. It is by examining Karim's position as an outsider, an "other," that she can reclaim her position as a "native" of Karachi. She is acutely aware of her own outsider position as she witnesses her father engaging in heated debates with his Sindhi friends on the question of the native and the outsider.

Cartographies of belonging

One of the major concerns of this research project is also to investigate how novelists, through their creative projects, explore possible ways of fostering a hermeneutics of co-belonging among individuals and communities. Through *Kartography*, Shamsie has effectively shown the possibility of emplacing displaced identities through subjective mode of narrativization. Shamsie lays emphasis on subjectivity as the tool for forging a popular allegiance of individuals and communities that would puncture the paternalistic conceptions of national narratives. Right from the beginning of the novel, Shamsie dwells upon the metaphor of a map to engage with two varying ideas about place-making and, consequently, nation-making: the objective view represented by Karim, and the subjective view represented by Raheen. Cartography serves as a metaphor to problematize the question of one's belonging to a place. Raheen and Karim have seemingly opposite

viewpoints concerning the significance of map making as a way of gauging one's belonging to and understanding of place. Karim attempts to create a map of Karachi, but for Raheen, mapping the city in terms of geographical coordinates resembles official projects of creating an illusionary cohesion.

Raheen's consideration of Karachi as home, as an abstract idea apart from a physical presence, is manifest in her disapproval of Karim's naming of the streets of Karachi in his map. She meditates,

> So what need was there for him to call the road by its official name, when he'd had no part in the naming, when he had no memories stored in the curves of its official consonants? We should have stories in common...stories, and jokes no one understands, and memories that we know will stay alive because neither of us will let the other forget...but over and above the jokes and stories and memories, he has maps and I don't. He has maps and I don't understand why. (65-66)

The difference in the way they think of direction is explained in the way Karim and Raheen tell Zia the direction to Kindergarten:

> Karim: 'Straight down sharah-e-Faisal and right on to Abdullah Haroon Road, and the school's on your right just before Aiwan-e-Saddar Road.'
> Raheen: 'Or, in Karachispeak, go straight straight straight straight straight and then turn right just after the Metropole, and when you see a church, stop.' (160)

Raheen, thus, believes that in Karachispeak, streets are not called by names. Raheen's disdain of maps based on exactitude is apparent in her rant about a "useless" map of Karachi that she takes with her to America hoping that it might bring any comfort to her when she was homesick. She finds that the map of Karachi was exactly the opposite of what the city was all about: "They could only exist through their disdain for the reality of the city: the jumble, the illogic, and the self-definition, the quicksilver of the place. As usual, the maps did nothing but irritate me. (131) Raheen claims to have no interest whatsoever in maps and street names, whereas Karim is obsessed with them. Karim's Endeavour is to understand Karachi through the creation of maps. Karim is trying to familiarize himself with the place through maps, as against Raheen, who does not see any point in doing so. Karim says, "I've been trying for the last few years to come to grips with Karachi's nature, to face all these things that are so hard to face..." (141).

Conversely, Raheen's contention is that if you belong to a place, you know the heartbeat of the place, not the name. The act of naming a street, Raheen claims, distances you from the "soul" of that place. For her, a city is built in the memory of its residents and not in street names. It is the "essence," either of a place or a relationship that matters. In her pastiche titled "Envisionable Cities," Raheen writes that

> 'the greatest city is the one that exists away from all eyes, including its own. Because no one defines it or maps out its co-ordinates, it can be anything and everything we dream a city should be.' (126)

Raheen continues to imagine a city of memories and allegories in another essay she writes and sends to Karim. Titled "Cities and Imagination," the essay presents a subjective

worldview for understanding a city rather than an objective one that Karim presents through his maps. Raheen writes that

> In Zytrow, there is too much going on for anyone to pause long enough to name the streets. If you want to go somewhere you must ask the inhabitants of the city to take you there. On the way they'll point out the city's landmarks: the fruit seller whose fruits are always a season ahad of everyone else's; the street with the dry-cleaner;s shop, where the two ghosts walked one summer; the airport where people begin to end friendships by simply failing to say goodbye.
>
> ...But if you leave Zytrow and forget its magic, you'll start listening to the poison of those who say all streets must have names. You'll join in the task of making directions easy for foreign travellers. And one by one, as you ink in your map, they disappear: the fruit seller, the ghosts, the friends you naver said goodbye to. (127)

Raheen's imaginary city stands for the imagination of a nation that defies any identity marker that divides places and people.

What is it that reconciles these competing claims to the place and what is it that brings these communities together towards peaceful coexistence? Contrary to the popular perception of Karachi as nothing other than a crime-ridden, hostile city, this novel shows Karachi a city that does not only an abode of violence but also the virtues of friendship, compassion and community feeling. Raheen reminds Karim of the need to see Karachi in its duality, when she says,

> Karachi at its worst is a Karachi unconcerned with people who exist outside the storyteller's circle, a Karachi oblivious to people and places who aren't familiar enough for nicknames. What I've mistaken for intimacy is really just exclusion... [But] just when we decide that intimacy is exclusionary, a man at the airport turns round and gives us his car-keys, a motia seller calls us 'sister' and adorns our wrists with flowers, families fling open their doors and avert their eyes and help us make our way to places of worship; at its best, Karachi is intimate with strangers. (331-2)

As Priya Kumar notes, this image of hospitality at the scale of the neighborhood is crucial to Shamsie's overall vision of Karachi as a city that is welcoming to different ethnic communities that live there (Kumar "Karachi as Home..." 176).[19]The mutual support that Karachiites give each other still holds the promise that Karachi can be a better place. Raheen's experience in the city when driving home alone points to this possibility when her car develops a flat tyre and is helped by strangers to fix it. She narrates,

> When I got out of the car to check it, a Suzuki van stopped and three men got out. A cyclist pulled over beside me. A fruit seller walked across the street towards me. I knew why they stopped, I knew what they were going

19 Kumar reads Karachi as a hospitable place that is intimate with strangers. I contend that Kumar's statement is only partly true in that the novel shows this intimacy with strangers as only one of the aspects of Karachi, and an ideal form of Karachi which Raheen as its protagonist envisions, but the novel also problematizes why Karachi has continually become an inhospitable place for strangers or even the familiar ones who have been considered strangers as the political and social conditions changed.

> to do. They told me to sit back in the car, with the air conditioning on. It was a hot, sticky day. They changed the tyre for me, and then they all left. It was exactly the sort of thing you'd expect unknown men to do in Karachi. (325)

Even as Karachi turns into a "death city," it does not cease to be a city with generosity, which is exemplified in the way a motia seller offers her a motia, calling her "sister," which Sonia observes as something "typical of our people. That generosity to strangers." (207). Raheen writes to Karim of the street that resembles her ideal city, which has no name but has the quality of unconditional hospitality and openness to strangers:

> There's a street in Karachi that follows the moon.
>
> Near an Imam Baragh, there's a line of houses, with back and front doors and no boundary walls. When the lunar calendar enters the month of Muharram, Shia women make their way to the Imam Baragh daily. There is a back door to the Imam Baragh for them, for the ones in purdah, and to reach that back door without being gazed upon by strangers in the open streets they walk through the neighboorhood houses. Back and front doors are flung open, and the women walk through the hallway of one house to the hallway of another until that alley within houses takes them all the way to the door of the Imam Baragh. It is an alley without name, it is an alley that ceases to exist when the moon disappears, but it is an alley all the same and one that says more about Karachi than anything you'll find on a street map. (330)

The fact that the street does not have a name allows Raheen to tell Karim the story of that street. For Raheen, it is important to know the city well in terms of its stories, and the degree of belonging and attachment to it. She wonders what will happen to "all those streets that hold no stories for us" (331).

Karim's offer towards the end of the novel to work along with Raheen on a web-based interactive map symbolizes the reconciliation of their differences. The proposed interactive map has the potential to bring both forms—Raheen's narrative map and Karim's non-narrative map, thus making way for realization of multiple identities in their understanding of Karachi and an idea of what an ideal Karachi should be. Karim explains his concept of the proposed web-based interactive map to Raheen as thus:

> You start with a basic street map, OK, but everywhere there are links. Click here, you get sound files of Karachiites telling stories of what it's like to live in different parts of town. Click there, you get a visual of any particular street...Click, you see which sections are under curfew. Click, you hear a poem. Choice of languages in which you can read the thing. Sound files in all kinds of dialects. Strong on graphics for people who are illiterate. (337)

Thus, through Karim's participatory and subversive map-making that defies a possible official mapping of the city, Shamsie envisions Karachi as a mobile, ever changing city which engages its inhabitatants in a constant dialogue and imagination. Since it is an open-ended and "life-long project," as Karim puts it, there is a possibility of making constant changes according to the needs and experiences of inhabitants. Caroline Herbert

writes in her essay "Lyric maps and the legacies of 1971 in Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography*,"

> As a multi-perspectival "lifelong project […] in a city that's always changing" (337-8), the map resists the possibility of completeness or closure. Rather, it presents Pakistani identities, and Karachi itself, as in constant motion, shared and created through—rather than despite—difference. (171)

Sarah A. Radcliffe in her essay "Third Space, Abstract Space and Coloniality" explores the possibility of expressing alternative forms of belonging through indigenous mapping that challenge postcolonial nationhood. Utilizing Bhabha's concept of "third space," Radcliffe claims the alternative cartography of indigenous populations helps critique current citizen regimes and the politics of representation" (130). Such "indigenous cartographies," as Homi K. Bhabha calls them, "supplement the cultural sign of postcolonial statehood adding 'a sense of belatedness to the original structure, interrupt[ing] the seriality of its narrative' " (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 155). The proposed map of the city will be a symbolic attempt of the younger generation to overcome differences and give voice to everyone through a map. Since a map metaphorically "maps" everyone, the "interactive map" will be a symbolic gesture of "interacting" within the city/nation. When the state fails to recognize the diversity of religious, ethnic and linguistic differences, it is the people who have to come together to forge friendships based on allegories, appreciating the affective aspects of compassion, love, friendship through stories. The map, at best helps create an allegorical world based on popular subjectivities akin to the concept of civil Imaginary, as discussed by Simon

During in his essay “Literature: Nationalism’s Other?” In the essay, During explains civil Imaginary as being based on “circulation of mimetic images, on the dissemination and ranking of social differences” (During 145).The concept of the social Imaginary is significant in that it challenges the hegemonic concept of the nation. During maintains civil Imaginary “reproduces everyday life in the public domain, reducing the gap between the divine/moral order and actual behaviour, thereby replacing the old science of casuistry by the modern domination of the life-world by style and civility” (During 143). During emphasizes that “writings carrying this system of ethics take the form of letters, memoirs, travelers’ tales, club papers, histories. Their ’truth’ or ’falsity’ is secondary to the task of representation itself. And they remain in the formalist sense, ’motivated’” (During 143). I argue that Karim’s interactive map is as valid a tool of subjective articulation.

Against amnesia: 1971 and the nation

The event of 1971 is at the heart of the story that affects the lives of characters even at the present of the novel. It was the year of ruptures—both in the life of the country and in the lives of Raheen’s and Karim’s parents. The civil war in East Pakistan culminated in the breakup of the country, which was followed by the breakup of their parents’ engagements and eventual swapping of each other’s fiancées. Karim fears that, being the shadow of her father, Raheen may repeat the “mistake”--that of the lack of historical understanding and insensitivity to cultural differences that had led to the break up of the engagement between Zafar and Maheen, but does not know the intricate details. However, Raheen is unaware of the reasons behind the fiancée swap. The issue of the swap, thus, remains as a puzzle from both Raheen and Karim, which they need to solve. When 1971 Bangladesh

liberation war was its peak, Zafar had pretended it had nothing to do with him until he was confronted by the reality of Pakistan's ethnic divide, at which point he had broken his engagement with Maheen so that he could protect himself from the social disadvantages of being linked to a Bengali woman (Cilano, *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction* 159). Karim believes that, Raheen, being an upper middle class Muhajir living in the affluent side of the city does not have a sense of the reality of the city—a trait that he links to her father, Zafar, who for a long time had pretended that the events unfolding in the wake of the 1971 civil war had nothing to do with him. What, after all, does something that happened a quarter of a century ago—when Raheen and Karim were not even born—have to do with their lives at present? "What does 1971 have to do with now?" Raheen asks herself (269). She further contemplates:

> 'Between our birth in 1947 and 1995, dead bang between our beginning and our present, is 1971, of which I know next to nothing except that there was a war and east Pakistan became Bangladesh, and what terrible things we must have done then to remain so silent about it. Is it shame at losing the war, or guilt about what we did to try to win that mutes us?' (270)

These are important questions whose answers Raheen needs to find in order to understand what is happening in Karachi at the present of the novel. *Kartography* attempts to remind readers of that mistake of forgetting, and an attempt to rectify that mistake by not taking recourse to amnesia but by acknowledging the past mistake and not let it repeat. It is only by remembering the events of 1971, the novel shows, that you become aware of the problems at present.

Salman Rushdie writes that those who claim to be intellectuals have sanctified "[T]he 'State truth' that about the war in Bangladesh ... that no atrocities were committed by the Pakistani army in what was then the East Wing" (*Imaginary Homelands*, 14). The task of literature, the novel in this case, according to Rushdie, "is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth," to "give lie to official facts" by pushing the artistic limits, go to the edge of these limits and "risk falling over it" (*Imaginary Homelands* 14-15). In the case of the partition of Pakistan, the event remained a "national amnesia," Pakistani history, as it did not find any mention in national narratives until the turn of the millennium when *The Report of the Hamoodur Rehman Commission of Inquiry into the 1971 War* was released (Cilano, *Contemporary Pakistani Fiction* 16). However, the event of 1971 was well documented in various other media in Pakistan itself as well as internationally. What literary writings, such as Shamsie's do, is to bring out individual narratives through imaginative ways into the public domain, sometimes challenging not only the official narrative but also the individuals and the society involved in such events. In the absence of official historiography, the personal becomes the political, as is happening in the case of Raheen and Karim. The prolonged silence on the part of the state —hence the absence of an official narrative about what actually happened during the nine months leading up to the secession—gave way to speculations about, and personalization of, the period. David Waterman has noted that, "In the absence of official narratives regarding Pakistan's traumatic history—especially Partition and the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war—the current generation of Pakistani writers proposes to fill those gaps where there has been only silence" (Waterman, "Review" 1). Shamsie represents the newer generation of writers asking difficult questions about the national amnesia of the two major losses

that are damning to the ego of the Pakistani state and its people: the defeat in the war with India after a sustained revolt by the Bengalis in the eastern part of the country, and the resultant loss of East Pakistan leading to its creation of Bangladesh. The shame of that defeat and loss in East Pakistan to the Indian army, and the torture inflicted by the West Pakistani army upon its own people, is vehemently shilded by the Pakistani state and society. Moreover, the question that concerns Raheen and Karim is, how did West Pakistanis react when much of East Pakistan was being crushed by the military in the name of protecting national integrity? *Kartography* is thus an indictment of the Pakistani society that sustained the collective "national amnesia" regarding the 1971 civil war. In the context of the violent insurrection of the Muhajirs in Karachi in the late eighties, the novel seems to suggest that one needs to learn from the past, remember not to forget, and understand and acknowledge the problems of the present so that history does not repeat itself. Karim reminds Raheen several times in the novel, that the fact that she was living in the tiny circle of the upper-class neighborhood would eventually make her in 1995 what her father was in 1971. Zafar, Karim says,

> '...thought he could pretend the war and everything going on had nothing to do with him, or with (Maheen); he pretended and pretended that the outlines in which they lived didn't matter, until one day it was his door and things inside him that he never acknowledged, never tried to deal with, came out. And you're the same, Raheen. The city is falling apart and you're the same.' (244)

For the longest time, Zafar keeps defending his disengagement with the political discourse at the time, assuming that he had nothing to do with the events unfolding in

East Pakistan. Zafar's attitude speaks of the upper class oblivion prevalent in the West Pakistani society at the time. As the events of 1971 unfold in East Pakistan, Zafar is repeatedly prodded by friends that he should leave Karachi for London as it becomes increasingly difficult for Maheen to live in Karachi without facing a backlash. But as much as it is home for him, Zafar forgets it is Maheen's home, too:

> When he mentioned moving, he'd thought that would mean leaving home for him, and leaving what was rapidly becoming enemy territory for Maheen. But this was her home, too. How could he have forgotten that? But he had. Not for a second, or an hour, but for days, for weeks. (187)

Zafar's oblivion of Maheen's claims to "home" in Pakistan represents the way in which Muhajirs presented the ethnic Bengalis of West Pakistan as well as East Pakistan as "others." When Zafar is harassed for being engaged for marriage with Maheen, a Bengali, in 1971, he automatically becomes a more "authentic" native Pakistani than a Bengali, who is considered an outsider, an "other." Zafar exercises this othering later when the consequence of the civil war comes right up to his door—when his friend Shafiq, whose brother was killed in Bangladesh during the communal backlash, confronts him for being engaged with Maheen, a Bengali. "How can I marry one of them? How can I let one of them bear my children? Think of it as a? How? Evidence? civic duty. I'll be diluting her Bengali blood line." This statement of Zafar's eventually leads to the breakup of the engagement between Zafar and Maheen, as the latter overhears the exchange. Zafar's initial pretension of oblivion the eventual bigotry represents, for Karim, the extent of what ethnic division can do to people and a nation.

For Raheen, who grows up believing that she was her father's daughter, the realization of her father's being "just a few steps from being an advocate of ethnic cleansing" (275) serves as a grim reminder of the perils of ethnic nationalism. The Muhajir claim to the nation is questioned later in the eighties when the Bengalis, the "common enemies" of the Sindhis and the Muhajirs, have seceded from the nation. One identity group, in order to assert its identity, has to present itself in terms of the "other." So, one has to create the category of the other for itself to be. The politics of presenting an "other" in order to assert one's own identity becomes manifest when Sindhis subject Muhajirs to the same kind of othering, just as the Muhajirs and the Sindhis had done to the Bengalis in 1971.

Kartography is also a tribute to friendships that sustain through the antagonisms of ethnic differences. Through enduring the most difficult times, these friends uphold the idea of attachment, trust and belonging. The fact that antagonisms hold the friendships of individuals in the Pakistani society together is reflected by Raheen when she says,

> If we had more reliable systems of law and governance, perhaps our friendships would be shallower. But with no one to rely on except one another, Karachites come together in times of crises with attitudes which suggest that no matter what else we are in our lives—bankers, teachers, hypochondriacs, cynics, Marxists, feudals, vegetarians, divorcees, bigamists, anorexics, dyslexics, sexists—our real vocation is friendship. (209)

The need of sustaining friendships between individuals and communities in politically vulnerable societies is reflected by Manav Ratti in his discussion of a postsecular society.

In his book *The Postsecular Imagination*, he argues of the need of native communities to forge a community-level friendship with their dislocated communities. He writes, "Political citizenship is one matter; but in the wake of the failure of the state, its secular ideals seem best realized through the lived, private domain of its peoples, through friendship and in Leela Gandhi's words, anti-communitarian communitarianism" (Ratti 65). When Karim leaves Karachi for London abruptly after disagreements with Raheen, she realizes that his departure helps both of them stop growing apart from, and forget, each other. "Instead he left," she says, "and that allowed both of us to remember—or re-imagine—our friendship as something mythic, something fated something waiting to be renewed and transfigured into a more adult version of itself. (214)

Hence, as much as celebration of a possible friendship of people belonging to different ethnic groups, it is also a celebration of individuals' win over ego and accepting the other wholeheartedly. Raheen and Karim, although they have very different attitudes towards map, a fact which creates a rift between them in the course of their adult lives, find a way to bring their attitudes together in creating something that marks the symbolic marriage of their worldviews. By re-establishing the friendship, and possible love, between Karim and Raheen, Shamsie presents a possibility of a filial relationship, camaraderie even, between these marginal voices that have been dislocated in the imagination of the nation. The theoretical understanding between Raheen on creating an interactive map, their brainchild, allows for such possibility.

The Muhajir concept of diaspora also problematizes the very concept and definition of diaspora that have been considered as similar for all diasporas. As Priya Kumar argues in her essay "Muhajirs as a Diaspora," the case of the Muhajirs undercuts the definitions provided by diaspora theorists who "tend to privilege homeland and attachment to homeland as characteristic of *all* diasporas" (3). The Muhajir case shows that not all diasporas have continued attachment to homeland, especially when the homeland is an enemy territory (Kumar 3). Kumar notes that the fact that the Muhajir community as a diasporic community is made of different identity groups back home, the way they constituted themselves in the adopted homeland is not through the nostalgia of homeland but through the sense of a community "forged by a shared history of migration, flight, dispersal and perceived sense of discrimination in the land of arrival" (Kumar 6). Rather than nostalgic memorialization of the homeland, the second or third generation diasporas tend to privilege their attachment to their present home rather than a far-fetched homeland of the ancestors. The case of the Muhajirs show exactly that. If the Muhajirs memorialize their ancestral homeland or home cities in India, it is to reinforce their position as real citizens of present day Pakistan, and that they have the rights to be considered as full citizens of Pakistan. Thus, the Muhajir claim is that it is exactly because of their displacement from India in the wake of the creation of Pakistan that they deserve a respectable position in Pakistan.

Kamila Shamsie does well in depicting Karachi as not only a conflict-ridden, inhospitable city, but also as a possible space for peaceful cohabitation of members of different cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic communities, including, obviously, the Muhajirs. As much

as it is about ethnic and community divides, *Kartography* is also about individuals' attempts to surpass that divide and come together as friends in spite of the external divides. Her imaginative vision of Karachi, based not in terms of divisionary cartographic borders but in terms connecting stories, anecdotes and memories presents an alternative way of resuscitating one's understanding of, and belonging to, a certain place. The interactive map that figures towards the end of the novel promises to bring both geometrical and allegorical modes of map making as complementary to one another rather than as antagonistic. This also symbolizes the reconciliation between Raheen and Karim to create a multi-perspectival platform for accommodating multiple identities within the framework of the nation on the basis of people to people cooperation through storytelling, friendship, and compassion, not through an illusionary maps and borderlines. Shamsie's vision of the interactive map does not only welcome the other, but also invites the other to claim the space through his own subjective construction. Shamsie, thus, foregrounds the imagination of a popular form of nationalism which dwells on the possibility of co-belonging through the articulation of difference, as opposed to the divisionary forms of state-sanctioned nationalism.

CHAPTER FOUR

Golden Bungalow, "Shonar Bangla": Tahmima Anam's *A Golden Age*

The intent of this chapter is to chart out the guiding principles that led to the formation of Bangladesh and its subsequent failure as a nation-state with reference to Tahmima Anam's debut novel *A Golden Age*. The literary oeuvre of Anam challenges the notion that sharing similar bonds can lead to the formation of a sustained nation, on the contrary, it is through the willingness to accommodate diversity and varied faith that the idea of nationhood can be formed. In the absence of such accommodative ideas, one could see, for instance rising fundamentalism, as very well seen in the case of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The birth of Bangladesh negated the assumption that religion alone can be the backbone for nation formation. The two nation theory, which was the guiding philosophy of the Muslim League's demanded a separate homeland for Muslims, on the assumption that Hindus and Muslims could not have a common nation because of their differing beliefs.While the formation of Pakistan was solely defined by religion, the two wings of the country had two different cultures altogether (Oldenburg, "A Place Insufficiently Imagined" 711). The different ethnicities, linguistic and religious sects make it a diverse nation, but there at the same time, it fails to recognize various marginal communities and identities, rendering them outside the idea of the nation.

The separation of Bangladesh was thus a refutation of the two-nation theory, which established that a common religion could not be the only criterion for a separate nation. The political domination and economic exploitation of East Pakistan - West Pakistan establishment led to the consolidation of Bengali identity as an independent nation.

Anam attempts to break away from the existing definition of nationhood in the sense that while patriotism, on one hand, claims to revive deep rooted sense of belonging, it also renders some the position of being homeless, at least at a metaphorical level. Rehana, the protagonist, is entrapped in a situation where neither Pakistan nor Bangladesh becomes home for her. The shared geographical space and linguistic differences make her homeless in her homeland and in her own house where both her children are staunch nationalists, and they fight for Bengal independence. *A Golden Age* shows that whereas the idea of a liberatioin was is a heroic and glorious one, its repurcussions go well beyond the idea of a nation. Apart from the violence unleashed by either security forces or the champions of national liberation, events such as these open up multiple avenues of violence in the personal and societal levels. The enmity between two linguistic groups, Urdu and Bengali, the glorification of Bengal all seem to come down to war like situation that divides an already divided and failed nation.

A Golden Age is the first novel of what Anam has termed the “Bengal trilogy,” which has charted out a fictional account of Bangladesh’s emergence and growth as an independent nation. The ambivalent idea of home and belonging is the crux of Anam’s trilogy. Her trilogy is, in fact, a gradual move from the idea of home as a desirable and feasible idea to

one in which the idea of the security of home becomes unreliable. The dream of a Bangladesh was at the beginning enticing to those who believed that linguistic bond interspersed with common religious identity could be a founding principle of a nation. However, her second novels begin to perceive the disillusionment of such assumptions, and it is finally shattered in the last part of her trilogy. Anam's second novel in the trilogy, *A Good Muslim* is a comment on the failures of the initial dream of a democratic homeland of the Bengalis, as Bangladesh was broiled in one military rule after other and the growth of Islamic fundamentalism. Anam's novel has several resemblances to her family history. Anam's father, Mahfuz, was a national debate champion before the war began, so he was sent by the liberation forces to campaign for public support on behalf of the liberation war in India (Lalwani and Winter-Levy). Anam's mother, Shaheen, along with her mother, "converted their home into a safehouse for freedom fighters, including one of Shaheen's brothers, Wasif" (Ibid). This family history finds a place in the narrative in *A Golden Age*, where Rehana harbors muktijoddhas, including her own son, Sohail, and one of mujktijoddha commanders, Major, along with safekeeping of war materials.Of her writings, Anam has said, "My first two novels were about how larger social and political forces transformed familial relationships. With my third novel, I found myself increasingly preoccupied with the political nature of relationships themselves" ("An Interview" 46).

A Golden Age follows the life events of Rehana Haque, a young widow, from 1959 to 1971—from the year she loses the custody of her children to her husband's brother, after her husband's sudden demise. In the present of the novel, which is the tumultuous year of

1971, Rehana has already had her children back for ten years, and her children are now actively engaged in student politics in their university. As East Pakistan gets embroiled in a nationalist war with the western wing of the country, Sohail and Maya, Rehana's children, join the war--Sohail as a guerrilla fighter and Maya as a journalist. The novel also weaves stories of interpersonal relationships and solidarities with the narrative of the nation in formation. In a way, the nine-month period of struggle is akin to the gestation period which symbolizes the birth of a separate nation in an anthropogenic sense. The novel begins with the loss of Rehana Haque's children to her husband's brother and his wife, and it ends with the birth of a new nation, in which she has played an important role, as a mother figure of the liberation movement. Rehana's life is very much interspersed with that of the Bangladeshi nation. It is in the course of the liberation war that Rehana is confronted with the need to rethink her identity and decide where she stands vis-a-vis the nationalist liberation war. In East Pakistan, home to an absolute majority of Bengalis, Rehana is an ethnic and linguistic outsider—she is a "Bihari" who speaks Urdu. In these terms, she could easily be considered closer to the establishment, where there is a significant presence of Biharis in critical positions, and her language is the language of the state. Sohail and Maya, however, are unapologetic nationalists, unlike their mother, who has an "ambiguous" relation with East Pakistan. Sohail, although a connoisseur of language and culture like his mother, is in his heart a true Bengali nationalist:

> Sohail loved Bengal. He may have inherited his mother's love of Urdu poetry, but it was nothing to the love he had for all things Bengali: the swimming mud of the delta; the translucent bony river fish; the shocking

> green palette of the paddy and the open, aching blue of the sky over flat land. (39-40).

Although she gradually turns into a nationalist, Maya realizes early on, when she joins school in Dhaka, that she is an outsider in Bengali-dominated Dhaka. She is teased by her classmates as "Bihari," as she speaks accented Bengali flavoured with Urdu, because of her stay in Lahore (52). The Bengali-Urdu conflict has put her in an in-between situation, engendering issues of identity and belonging though she takes stand on being a Bengali as the novel proceeds.

Language, home, and homeland: the other partition

Having faced several partitions, and also the real prospects of partition, South Asian imaginings of home have become burdened with the imageries of partition. The partition of the country is often reflected in the microcosm of home. Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* depicts the partition of a joint family house, thus partitioning the families of two brothers, recreating the trauma of partition that the South Asian subcontinent faced. But in Ghosh's novel, the families, eventually, "liked the wall now; it had become a part of them' (124). Anam's *The Good Muslim* also depicts partition in the aftermath of the liberation of Bangladesh, where Sohail creates a partition between believers and non-believers, and Islamists and non-Islamists, where his own mother, Rehana, remains on the other end of the partition. The house is divided into the lower level where Rehana lives and the upper level where Sohail has created a different space for his Islamic preachings. In the novel, Maya hears Sohail speak in a disembodied voice "[f]rom beyond the partition" (134) about religion.

The creation of Bangladesh as an independent country through the partition of Pakistan was different in one fundamental way: there was no need to mark boundaries of partition, as they were already a thousand kilometers away anyway. The partition, therefore, was on the ideological and political level, and not on the level of political geography, as it was already partitioned. The foremost problem Pakistan posed as a newly emerged South Asian nation-state was this: can a country divided into two parts, a thousand miles apart with an "enemy" country in between, sustain the idea of a homogeneous nation-state? Can the idea of a Muslim homeland sustain itself in spite of differences of ethnicity and language among those Muslims? The very concept of Pakistan as a Muslim homeland was undercut by the fact of its being cleft into two wings, both of them quite apart in linguistic, ethnic, political and administrative terms. So much so that during the liberation movement, the restrictions put by India on its air space meant that Pakistan could not fly its planes over the Indian sky to reach the eastern wing directly, and had to take a longer route, stopping at Colombo to refill, thus incurring huge expenses on fuel.

This is a concern among the East Pakistanis in the novel, including Rehana, who wonders, "what sense did it make to have a country in two halves, poised on either side of India like a pair of horns?" (38). On the one hand, the idea of a homeland itself--even with the inclusion of East and West Pakistan was ill-founded and only partially realized, as a large section of the Muslims who were expected to go to Pakistan chose to stay back in India, including some of Jinnah's close aides such as Ismail Khan and the Nawab of Chhatari, who "could not 'tear themselves apart from their social milieu and cultural

moorings'..." (Mushirul Hasan; Saadia Toor, 205). Maybe I could explain a bit of history as to how Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto kept Sheikh Mujibur Rahman waiting for months even after the overwhelming majority gained by the Awami League, which would make Mujib the prime minister of Pakistan. Several reports have put the blame on Bhutto who, as these reports claim (Bass, *The Blood Telegram*) did not want a Bengali to become a prime minister, and that he convinced Yahya to postpone the handing over of power to Mujib. Being a highly divided and homogenized state, Pakistan of 1971 was not willing to let the power centers of Islamabad to be in the hands of the Bengalis. The dissatisfaction of the Bengalis is expressed in the words of Sohail, who says:

> ...Pakistan is bleeding us out. We earn most of the foreign exchange. We grow the rice, we make the jute, and yet we get nothing--no schools, no hospitals, no army. We can't even speak our own bloody language! (33)

Sohail's comment at once explains the many discords that had shaped East Pakistan's relationship with the Western end. Moreover, the boiling point of the Bengalis' dissatisfaction came during the devastating cyclone in East Pakistan in late 1970, when West Pakistan made no efforts at rescue and rehabilitation. Considered the food basket of Pakistan, produced food as well as revenue, it was exploited by the Pakistani state without giving proper compensation to the Bengalis (Bass, *The Blood Telegram*). This is reflected in the novel where the narrative voice says of what had happened in 1970:

> ...when the cyclone hit, it was as though everything came into focus. Rehana remembered the day Sohail and Maya had returned from the rescue operation;" the red in their eyes as they told her how they had waited for the food trucks to come and watched as the water rose and the bodies

> washed up on the shore; how they had realized, with mounting panic, that the food wouldn't come because it had never been sent. (39).

The fact that East Pakistan was neglected and left to fend for itself even in dire situations as the 1970 cyclone speaks of the failure of the two-nation theory that was the founding principle of the partition of India in 1947. If religion was the sole basis which could hold the country together, as the two-nation theory claimed, why did it neglect a part of its own during a situation of emergency? After all, East Pakistan comprised a vast majority of Muslims, though they were Bengali Muslims. The neglect during the cyclone, and later the reluctance to invite Mujib to form a government consolidated East Pakistanis' suspicion that they would remain as cultural "others," and were a misfit in the idea of Pakistan. The case of East Pakistan's dissatisfaction with West Pakistan shows that the idea of Pakistan as a Muslim homeland fell apart as early as immediately after the homeland was achieved. It realized very early that the two-nation theory that it followed while breaking away from India was an unsustainable idea, one that would have multiple fallouts. Even though it was demographically stronger than the western wing, East Pakistan was dominated and its powers limited by West Pakistan ever since the inception of Pakistan as a new country (Toor, "Bengal(is) in the House" 209). Ever since the beginning, the Pakistani state, dominated by Muhajirs and later Sindhis—especially after the political rise of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto—denied the Bengalis their share in national political and economic affairs, even though East Pakistan had demographic strength, and had a larger share in economic contribution to the state. As early as 1947 itself, Bengalis realized that their linguistic and cultural rights were to be curtailed in the new Muslim homeland, under the hegemonic idea of a Pakistani nation. The language movement, with

the demand for Bengali to be declared a national language alongside Urdu, started right after the formation of Pakistan as an independent state, and continued in low intensity for around five years until when, on February 21, 1952, when the Pakistani state assassinated Dhaka University students language rights activists. While the suppression of the Bengali language exposed the fraught process of nation formation in Bangladesh, the separation liberation of Bangladesh exposed the problem underlying the very idea of the two-nation theory upon which Pakistan was founded (Bose and Jalal 179).

In his book, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, Iain Chambers argues that language is not simply a means of communication but "a means of cultural construction in which our very selves and sense are constituted" (22). It is this sense of attachment to the self that makes language an essential element of one's belonging to the world, and a marker of an individual's or a group's identity. In Anam's *A Golden Age*, language becomes the domain of contestation of estrangement and belonging when Rehana, an Urdu-speaking Bihari finds herself dislocated in her place as she is "unable to pretend...that she could replace her mixed tongue with a pure Bengali one, so that the Muslim salutation, *As-Salaam Alaikum* was replaced by natural *Adaab*, or even *Nomoshkar*, the Hindu greeting. Rehana's tongue was too confused for these changes" (Anam 55). Rehana's sister, Marzia, has condescending attitudes towards Bengalis. She is on the Urdu-speaking side of Pakistan, and Rehana is in Dhaka, and is more akin to Bengali culture, although she prefers Urdu over Bengali. The linguistic demoralization of Rehana is evident in Marzia's comment when she tells Rehana: " 'Your Urdu is not as good as it used to be; must be all that Bengali you're speaking.' " (21). Rehana speaks Urdu, which is the national language

of Pakistan, but she is considered not Bengali enough in the Eastern wing of the country. But for her sisters who live in the Western wing, Rehana is a lesser Pakistani, as she continues, to their dismay, to live in East Pakistan even after her husband is dead. It is this double sense of disbelonging that defines Rehana's identity. Suspected though she is of her loyalty to both the wings of the country, Rehana finds herself at home in both.

In Dhaka, Rehana is a double outsider. She is originally from Calcutta in India, an enemy country, although the trans-local cultural and linguistic affinity between East Pakistan and West Bengal of India is more akin to each other than the other, Western part of Pakistan. She finds herself at home in Dhaka because of her filial connection to place, as it is the city of her husband and her children. But her real sense of belonging is in the linguistic domain: she is a connoisseur of international popular culture as well as of language. And she is an Urdu-speaker, considered a "Muhajir" or a "Bihari" because of her linguistic identity, in East Pakistan, where the dominant language is Bengali, and is therefore a linguistic outsider as well as someone worthy of ridicule and hatred as she speaks the language of the state."These non-Bengalis were known as the Biharis, an Urdu-speaking and Muslim minority, reviled by Bengali nationalists as ostensible toolds of their fellow Urdu speakers in West Pakistan" (Bass, *The Blood Telegram* 84-85). While some Biharis supported the Awami League and its claims for autonomy, many others backed West Pakistan (Bass, *The Blood Telegram* 85).

Rehana's relationship with Urdu becomes strained, and it feels alien to her when, in the wake of the 1971 war of independence, she participates in the struggle for a separate

nation for the Bengalis. At one instance, when Rehana goes to the butcher's to buy meat in the wake of the war, the latter tries to forge kinship through Urdu, Rehana realizes "how strange the language suddenly sounded: aggressive, insinuating. She saw that it was now the language of her enemy; hers and Sohail's and the Major's" (Anam 137-138). Hence the suspicion of the Biharis. Rehana's position as an outsider among her own people thus represents what Cara Cilano terms the "arbitrary nature of national boundaries" (*National Identities* 121). Cilano rightly points out that "Rehana's Muhajir identity simply gets left behind as she and her children become more deeply embedded in another nationalist narrative." (*National Identities* 122). Rehana is a thus cultural misfit in East Pakistan, where she speaks Urdu fluently, which is a taboo in a society that considers the language as that of the enemy, and against the imposition of which they have launched their prolonged movement. In the Bengalis' attempt to created a separate homeland of Bengalis, Rehana is a linguistic alien. Rehana thus finds herself grappling with the terms of the revolution that have meanings in absolute terms, such as "comrade," "proletariat," and "revolution." (55). Those words, as the writer explains, are "hard, precise words and did not capture Rehana's ambiguous feelings about the country she had adopted." (55). Anam further writes,

> She spoke, with fluency, the Urdu of the enemy. She was unable to pretend, as she saw so many others doing, that she could replace her mixed tongue with a pure Bengali one, so that the Muslim salutation, *As--Salaam Alaikum* was replaced by the neutral *Adaab*, or even *Nomoshkar*, the Hindu greeting. Rehana's tongue was too confused for these changes. She could

> not give up her love of Urdu, its lyrical lilts, its double meanings, its furrowed beat. (55)

Her love of Urdu makes Rehana a figure of suspicion in the eyes of her daughter, who, being lured by the pull of the liberation and the protective control of her mother, claims that her mother must be in the Pakistani side. (103). In a dramatic scene, Rehana faces suspicion from her daughter, Maya, who claims, “You have no feeling for this place.” To Maya’s suspicion, Rehana had to respond with a double claim that “ ‘This is my home. Your father’s home.’ “ (102). Later, when Maya seeks Rehana’s help in sewing blankets for the liberation fighters, the latter takes it as an opportunity to prove her loyalty to the cause of Bangladesh. When her friend, Mrs. Rahman, asks her if she wants to open a tailoring shop, Rehana responds: “ ‘Don’t you know? We’re at war, and my daughter says I have to do something. To prove I belong here. So I’m doing something.’ “ (106). Rehana finds herself in a liminal position as she is an Urdu-speaker in East Pakistan, where the identity a minority language speaker is equated to that of a collaborator.

The fact that Urdu speakers are suspected of collaborating notwithstanding their identities shows the fallibility of the idea of otherness based on the idea of a nation as a singular, homogeneous entity with a common language and ethnicity. The narrative voice says, “The division of the city into sympathizers and collaborators sat uncomfortably with Rehana, but [Sohail] told her there had to be some way of knowing who to suspect and who to trust. They could no longer trust their instincts. Or even their friends” (136). So when Sohail asks Rehana to “ ‘Watch out for the butchers... they’re Urdu-speaking’,” Rehana confronts her son by reminding him that she, his mother, is Urdu-speaking as well

(136). Sohail is well aware of the politics of language, when he uses the word “Ammi,” an Urdu word for mother, and not “Ma,” a Bengali word, when he has to take his mother’s favor. This shows how the idea of Bengali nationalism and the foregrounding of Bengali language is not always at the center of human interrelationships, and that the preference over language could be altered according to one’s immediate needs. The narrator’s voice says: “The Urdu word was the secret language of long ago; it meant he was a boy, her boy, again” (191). But it is also to please her that he calls her with the Urdu word, thus invoking the proximity with his mother through her favorite language.

Even as Rehana gradually immerses herself in the quest for the Bengali nation, she finds herself alienated from her favorite language, Urdu. At the meat shop, the familiar Bihari butcher tries to strike a conversation with Rehana, and even get affective affinity from her because of the shared common language, Urdu, that both speak. But Rehana is made conscious of the difference she has with the butcher, as they are now on different sides of the war. Hence, when the butcher asks her “ ‘How are you’,” she responds by saying, “ ‘We’re having a war.’ “ (137). Rehana’s sudden transformation from an Urdu-phile to Urdu-phobic shows the divisiveness that the idea of a nation brings to people. When the butcher says, “ ‘I’ve nowhere else, madam’ “ (137), Rehana finds that “the words were hollow, and [she] realized how strange the language suddenly sounded: aggressive, insinuating. She saw that it was now the language of her enemy; hers and Sohail’s and the Major’s. She tried to feel something else, some tenderness for the poets, some sympathy for this man, only a meat-cutter after all” (137-138). Further, “Rehana could see that he was afraid of her, and she was pleased, and then ashamed to be pleased” (138). Rehana’s

class position, and the fact that she is now gradually turning into a Bengali nationalist, puts her in a position where she remains in an antagonistic position with the butcher who, during earlier times, would share a cultural and linguistic affinity with her. Again towards the end of the novel, Rehana uses Urdu as a last resort, "her only card" (299) to her benefit when her house is raided by the Pakistani soldiers and Maya could be taken away by the soldiers. In her "perfect, native Urdu," Rehana tries to negotiate with the Urdu-speaking Pakistani soldier.

A Golden Age also shows the divide of families within the same country of because of linguistic and cultural nationalism. As Rehana goes on to help the guerrillas, sewing kathas and making pickles for the guerrillas,

> Rehana wondered what her sisters would make of her at this very moment. Guerrillas at Shina. Sewing kathas on the rooftop. Her daughter at rifle practice. The thought of their shocked faces made her want to laugh. She imagined the letter she would write. Dear sisters, she would say. Our countries at war; yours and mine. We are on different sides now. I am making pickles for the war effort. You see how much I belong here and not to you. (119).

As much as it is about the founding of a new nation, *A Golden Age* is also a story of personal loss and the struggle to regain and retain what one possibly could. Early on, Rehana has lost her husband to a heart attack, as well as her children, albeit temporarily, to her husband's brother, Faiz, and his wife, Parveen, a "barren" woman, who looks "hungrily" at Rehana's children. It is this loss ("My children are no longer my children."

(5)) that makes Rehana possessive of her children later on. The patriarchal and corrupt judicial system of Pakistan deems Rehana unfit to look after her children, as she “had not taught them the proper lessons about Jannat and the afterlife” (5). Rehana is considered culturally and socially unfit to look after her children, as she “had taken the children to see *Cleopatra*” a film considered “unsuitable” for young children.(6). The political and personal are so interspersed that even when Faiz takes the children in his custody, the reasons he gives are both political and personal: “ ‘It’s not safe here, milord. Martial law, strikes, people on the streets--not safe. That is why my wife and I want to take the children to Lahore.’ “ (6). Rehana’s identity as a widow with the lack of cultural knowledge, and the troubled political condition of East Pakistan, thus becomes a rallying point for Faiz to claim the custody of the children. Rehana is a connoisseur of cultural and literary productions; she loves poetry and watches English films, which is considered indecent in the cultural context of East Pakistan. Rehana is someone who wants stability:

> She had married a man she had not expected to love; loved a man she had not expected to lose; lived a life of moderation, a life of few surprises. She had asked her father to find a husband with little ambition. Someone whose fortunes had nowhere to go. (7).

But as the novel unfolds, Rehana is seen caught in a series of unstable conditions, with the political activism of her children and the political changes engulfing East Pakistan. The only stability, it seems, is the constancy of change and turmoil, and Rehana is not left unaffected by such changes. The fact that Rehana has had to lose the custody of her children and to bribe the judge to get them back speaks of the decay in social decay engulfing the post-colonial Pakistani society. Rehana’s most vital concern is the safety of

her children, which reassures her time and again in the course of the novel. But what about them? Are they similarly concerned with the safety of their mother? For Rehana, the entire discourse about the revolution and the new country has had a toll on the relationship between the mother and the children. But she also sees it as an opportunity to pay her old debts, to renew her relationship, and a way of atonement for the things she had done to get her children back.

The Bangladesh liberation war also showed another fault line of the two-nation theory—that of the marginal position the remaining Hindus in Pakistan. The increasing Islamization of the nation-building process in Pakistan made it imperative that religions other than Islam be relegated to a secondary status. So, when protests emerged in Bangladesh in early 1971, the first accusations were made about the Bengali Hindus. According to Gary Bass, "The Hindus were not the nucleus of any armed resistance. They were unarmed and dispersed around East Pakistan. But the Hindus were tainted by purported association with India, and were outliers in a Pakistani nation defined in Muslim terms" (82). So in *A Golden Age*, when the Army begins "Operation Searchlight" the first set of refugees that turn up at Shona, Rehana's home rented by a Hindu Bengali family, are Hindus. One of the passages in the novel describes the religious prejudice that accompanied the action of the army:

> Nawabpur Road was in the army's way as they passed through the old town on their way to Shakaripotti, the Hindu neighbourhood. Perhaps they had taken a wrong turn; perhaps they'd held their maps upside down it maybe it was taking too long to get there and they were impatient, the blood leaping

> in their skins. They swiped with their machine-guns, back and forth, and one of their bullets found the house on Nawabpur Road. Mrs. Rahman's schoolfriend escaped with a grazed cheek, but her husband, crouching under the dining table, did not. (81)

Later in the novel, Rehana's brother in law, Faiz, says of Hindus: "They don't treat it like their own country. Leaving at the drop of a hat, going off to India—they were *never* a part of Pakistan. Good riddance to them, I say, let them go back to where they came from" (208). Faiz's wife who has come with her husband Faiz in the mission of "getting rid" of "the dirty elements of our great nation" such as "The Hindus, the Communists, the separatists" (122), chides Rehana for renting her house out to the Senguptas. When the war starts in the hinterlands, it is the Hindus who suffer the most, as Sohail reports to his mother (114). The founding of Bangladesh as "home" comes at the cost of someone like Supriya, who belongs to a minority Hindu community, losing a home that was Dhaka. At the end of the novel, Supriya is a lonely refugee who has lost her husband and son to the war, and has lost her dwelling or sense of belonging to Dhaka, and thus rendered homeless in Calcutta.

Shona and the golden dream of Bangladesh

The idea of home is intricately linked with the idea of the nation, so much so that it is sometimes difficult to extricate the entanglement of meanings embedded in the word. For Rehana, East Pakistan is her adopted home, but as she goes on to partake in the liberation war for the sake of her children, the idea of Bangladesh takes shape in her mind. In expressing solidarity with her own children and the others, Rehana "felt sure it would all

resolve itself: Sheikh Mujib would be Prime Minister, and the country would go on being her home and the children would go on being her children." (58). Claire Chambers argues that "In South Asian literature, writers frequently stage the family home as a microcosm of the nation." ("Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*" 153). *In A Golden Age*, Shona represents both the personal and the political in Bangladesh. On the one hand, it is a testimony to the extent to which Rehana could go to keep her family intact. For Rehana, Shona "was there to remind her of what she had lost, and what she had won. And how much the victory had cost. That is why she had named it *Shona*, gold. It wasn't just because of what it had taken to build the house, but for all the precious things she wanted never to lose again." (18-19). And on the other, *Shona* is also the manifestation of the golden dream of Bengal, as symbolized by the phrase "Aamar Shonar Bangla." *Shona* is the base camp for the liberation movement which heralded a golden future of Bangladesh. Shona becomes the launching pad of the revolution, and in becoming such a launching pad and a guerrilla base, it purges from the guilt of the use of actual stolen shona or gold.

A Golden Age is a woman-centric novel where the presence of male members of the family is peripheral but also very significant in that they all affect Rehana's life and the world significantly--Iqbal, whom Rehana addresses throughout the novel through her confessional graveyard meets/prayers; Sohail, who is the centre of her life at the cost of Maya, and also the Major, who comes as a significant presence in Rehana's life to fulfil the lack of men (Iqbal and Sohail). Whereas Rehana makes every possible sacrifice to please Sohail, he, in turn, turns selfish. He is dedicated to his love to Silvi although she is married and considers him an outsider. Rehana cannot retain her son with her. She has to

constantly struggle to retain him, whereas he is lost to Silvi, to the war. When she thinks that she has control over him, he is already bound to Silvi, and it takes Rehana to realize this fact. Just as Rehana is dedicated to her son, her son is dedicated to his ex-lover, Silvi. In a way, Sohail balances it out. Her unforgiving attitude towards Maya and her "confrontation" of Maya for hideously participating in guerrilla training reflects the way in which Rehana compensates her gradual loss of control over Sohail.

Rehana is aware that she is fast losing her children to the dream of a revolution for a new motherland. Her children start to look like strangers, Sohail becoming "something unmistakably foreign," (113) and Maya spending her days at the university. This leads her to believe that "My children have not always been my children." (114). So she has to adapt herself to the new changes, and it is this desire to keep her family from possible disintegration that Rehana joins the liberation movement albeit reluctantly. Whereas for Maya and Sohail, it is the dream of bringing about real revolutionary changes and establishment of a new homeland that draws them to the liberation war, for Rehana, it is her desire to keep the family integrated that drives her to the war.

Rehana gradually realizes that she has transformed from a mother of her children to mother of all warring children of Bengal. She even begins to consider if she is a nationalist at the time of liberation war when her shelves are filled with volumes of Urdu poetry. Language thus becomes a parameter for Rehana to judge her loyalty to the cause of Bengalis, and she founds herself in an ambivalent position. When the Major asks her why she is still in Dhaka, she is more clear. She responds, " 'It's my home, and the home

of my children. I would not give it up for anything ...' " (164). Rehana's transformation into a Bengali nationalist is, therefore, an amalgamation of spatial politics, the sense of belonging to a place and immediate familial identity, and also the material and rhetorical circumstances that engulf East Pakistan in the wake of the liberation movement. In the beginning, Rehana is not very comfortable with the idea of a revolution (as words like revolution, protest, etc. sound heavy and too difficult for her tongue to pronounce but as the movement grows, she becomes a convert.

Family, sacrifice, and atonement

A Golden Age uses familial metaphors in abundance, indicating the way in which the germination of Bangladesh as a new nation was based on the idea of a single family of blood, linguistic and cultural ties. The very idea of the founding of Bangladesh as a new nation is centered around the figure of Bongobondhu, who is considered the father figure for the Bengalis. The narrative voice says, "They belonged to him now; they were his charge, his children. They called him father. They loved him the way orphans dream of their lost parents: without promise, only hope." (57). The metaphor repeats in a gendered perspective when Rehana starts to be considered the mother figure of all the Bengali nationalists. The narrative voice says that even as Rehana started out to help the liberation war for the love of her son, "...even so, it was somehow bigger...to have done something for the country and not just in the service of her own children" (128). Rehana has also to play the role of a mother to the guerrillas who "haven't seen their own mothers in a long time" (125). Rehana is thus becoming aware of the fact of her helping the country inch towards liberation even her initial intention is to keep her family intact. As Rehana

becomes more involved in the war, going to the extent of freeing Silvi's husband, Sabeer, from the prison, she addresses him as a "son." Whereas these are the kinds of terms that South Asians use frequently to call others, there is also something more about the "familial" aspect in such a gesture. For Rehana, rescuing Sabeer is an ethical question, but also an opportunity for atonement for herself. It is on the day that Rehana gets her atonement, by helping her son regain Sabeer for Silvi, that Rehana finds herself free enough be in the Major's embrace. Rehana had "fallen in love with a stranger and uttered words she'd kept hidden for more than a decade" (248). It is also the opportunity to serve Sohail that gives Rehana the courage to face what is supposedly the "men's world" of the army, the barracks, and release Sabeer from the jail. But again, she brings a gendered perspective and familial connection when she stands up to Faiz when confronted by Faiz for having sent Maya to Calcutta to join the Muktis, she says " 'Don't forget she's your niece. Your blood.' " (221).

Whereas the Major gives Sohail a new life by saving him during the bombing, Rehana becomes an accomplice in the disappearance and possible death of the Major. In becoming Sohail's replacement by deceiving the army officers, the Major conflates the father/son relationship into one. With a potential sexual relationship with Rehana, and by sacrificing himself (he calls Rehana a mother in front of the army officers) he fulfills the duty of a father as well as a son. So, in a way, the Major, a nameless figure, is the bridge between Rehana's husband and son, and brings all of them in a metaphorically incestuous relationship. The Major also comes as a scapegoat to help Rehana get her atonement as he sacrifices himself to save Sohail towards the end of the novel when the army comes

looking for him. To keep her family intact, Rehana could go to the extent of looting wealth or even possibly helping extinguish someone's life. This fact brings Rehana's moral integrity under question, and exposes fallibility of human desires that lead people to commit injustices against "others" to save their own. At the same time, Rehana has to constantly struggle with the prospect of loss—her loss of Iqbal, her temporary loss of her children's custody, and the loss of her parents' material property. These losses make Rehana so possessive of whatever is remained with her, that she goes out of her way to protect the integrity of her family. In this sense, Rehana is a woman without high moral conscience, and in making her choice, she "let that man pay my debt" (315). And even as she asks for forgiveness, Rehana herself does not follow the idea of unconditional forgiveness, as she does not forgive Faiz, and lets him remain in custody even when she has the power to release him easily. Towards the end of the novel, when Faiz is in custody after the muktijoddhas take control of Dhaka, Rehana shows no mercy to Faiz, who is in jail when the liberation movement succeeds. As the "mother" of the liberation movement, Rehana is in a position to easily take Faiz out of jail, but she refuses to do so, although she has in the past taken help of Faiz to release Captain Sabeer from the jail. This shows that Rehana is concerned with her family, but also for the country, and she is punishing Pakistan on behalf of her newly established country by leaving aside her familial ties with Faiz. For her, the question of what crimes have been committed determine the extent to which she can forgive.

The decades that followed the liberation of Bangladesh from the Pakistani nation-state did not sustain the idea of the "Shonar Bangla" envisaged by the large numbers of

muktijoddhas such as Rehana, Sohail, and Maya. The new nation “wavered between civilian and military rule and its citizens grew accustomed to endemic political corruption, unexplained disappearances and murders, and vigorous street protests” (Lalwani and Winter-Levy, “A Daughter"). The gradual Islamization and ruin of political and social structures of the post-1971 period of Bangladesh’s history are depicted in Anam’s second novel, *The Good Muslim*. Rehana is obsessed with the idea of atonement for the things she has done, albeit in her desperate attempt to save her family. The narrative voice says, “It was the most distasteful, gruesome task. But it was also an opportunity. Her son was giving her another chance to atone. The years of slavish devotion, the mothering, the theft—she had always known they would not be enough. She could not help welcoming the prospect of some new sacrifice” (194). Rehana says to her son: “I’m as much a slave to you as you are to [Silvi]” (195). Her desperate devotion to her son makes her go to the extent of asking a favor from Faiz. In Iqbal’s absence, she is doing things that Iqbal would have normally done, or would have chosen not to do. The question of justice, injustice, and atonement come entangled in both of Anam’s novels. *The Good Muslim* is deeply concerned with the idea of atonement in various levels, just as in the *A Golden Age* Rehana is concerned with it. The second novel centers around the life of Sohail, who has turned into an Islamist preacher, and is obsessed with the idea of atonement for the crime—the murder of a Bihari—in the immediate aftermath of the end of the liberation war. Similarly, Maya, who becomes a “lady doctor” in the aftermath of the war, is concerned with the idea of her atonement for the “crime” she committed by helping birangonas—an eulogistic term for victims of rape during the survivors of rape—abort their fetuses.

In *A Golden Age*, Anam makes the idea of homeland and sense of belonging an ambiguous concept. While the newly formed Bangladesh glorifies its independence, linguistically and culturally, a part of that Bengali sensibility still longs for its Urdu counterpart reiterating the fact that the idea of belonging and home is a fluid concept. In her later novels, she reinstates this idea when she depicts Bangladesh as a poverty stricken nation struggling to cope with the aftermath of the devastating liberation war. She challenges the idea of romanticizing wars on the pretext of creating borders and self-proclaimed homes. Bangladesh as a nation state finds itself amidst poor governance, sheer poverty, and a longing to regain the idea of a glorious nation.

Anam, through the character of Rehana, also depicts the idea of multiple homes where one sees an individual dwelling at various spaces. The singular idea of home is, therefore, one that imposes a fixed geographical space to an individual's identity. The following passage from the novel sums up how Rehana feels the presence of home at multiple spaces that surprisingly includes Calcutta as well: "For Rehana, the journey towards Calcutta "smelled of home" (238). But she is also not able to correct those who mistake her for a refugee and show a sense of solidarity. Her idea about her identity in Calcutta, thus, is ambivalent at best. When in Calcutta, she finds herself wondering if she is a resident or a refugee; if the city is a refuge or an old home. So when a shopkeeper asks her if she is from Dhaka, she considers, "No, actually...I'm from Calcutta (261). Anam's account of Bangladesh liberation war opens new vistas to understand issues of home, nations, and futility of wars, reiterating the importance of hospitality and tolerance, for

the binaries of “us” versus “them’’ are never concrete nor is the sense of belonging to a given geographical space.

CHAPTER FIVE

Home is Nowhere: Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*

This chapter is different from the others in this research project in several ways. While its primary focus will be Manjushree Thapa's *Seasons of Flight*, it also deals extensively with the historical causes that have contributed to the formation of the native "other" in Nepal. It then discusses briefly the Nepali writings that have dealt with political changes in Nepal. The reason for doing so is three-fold: first, the novel *Seasons of Flight* is slightly different from the other novels taken up in this research project. Whereas the other novels focus primarily on the condition of the "native other" within South Asia, Thapa's novel is essentially a diasporic novel regarding its narrative focus. So, even as it examines Prema's diasporic consciousness, it also gives a general background to the Nepali politics and society which provides a background to Prema's homelessness. Second, Nepali is the primary language of literary production in Nepal—in contrast with English, which has come into prominence only after the turn of the millennium, and which is spearheaded by Manjushree Thapa—so any discussion on Nepali literature should acknowledge the vast resources in Nepali. While the question of marinalization of different communities in Nepal has caught the attention of Nepali as well as foreign scholars, we are yet to see fictional texts, especially in English, dealing with these issues extensively. As compared to Nepali-language literature, English-language literature has not been able to keep pace with the socio-political changes that Nepal, the oldest South Asian nation, has gone through in contemporary times. Third, since the attempt in this research project is also to establish the

prominence of writings from smaller and newer countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal to make discussion on South Asia more inclusive, it is pertinent here to engage with a relatively less-known area of literature. The choice of Nepali writings for detailed discussion is purely pragmatic—the researcher's access to Nepali language and literature as a native speaker.

In *Reading Migration and Culture: The World of East African Indian Literature*, Dan Ojwang has asked a rhetorical question: "But what then becomes of the immigrants who are torn between an elusive cosmopolitan ideal and homes to which they cannot really return?" Ojwang's answer is that they learn to live "on the margins of their host nations and the margins of their own ethnic communities" (45). Manjushree Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight* depicts the kind of homelessness that arises from belonging nowhere—what we may call cosmopolitan homelessness—that Ojwang is alluding to. Thapa's protagonist, Prema, finds herself unable to retain her attachment with her homeland, Nepal, which she fled to get rid of the Maoist Movement but is also unable to be at home in America, where she has taken a citizenship. *Seasons of Flight* reflects upon the post-1990 Nepal, which ushered in the age of democratization of politics also that of instability which caused alienation and the mass exodus of the Nepalese. Thapa's novel depicts the how an individual can be alienated at both home and away, as represented by the protagonist, Prema, who finds herself struggling to belong to her homeland as well as abroad. It will begin with an elaboration on why the nation-building processes and flirtations with democracy have brought about long spells of authoritarianism and the resultant alienation of its the Nepalese people. The concepts of alienation and dislocation

have been fundamental aspects of nation-building process in Nepal, the attempts at making citizens have also meant that the state has ended up "unmaking" citizens as well.

Nation, nationalism and the native "other" in Nepal

After the successful movement for restoration of democracy in April 2006, which paved way for the transformation of Nepal from a Hindu monarchy to a secular republic, Nepal has undergone, especially after April 2006, a long transitional phase that involves taking together two seemingly antagonistic challenges: uniting the nation through a peace process after the ten-year Maoist insurgency that devastated the economic as well as political capital of the country; and devolution of the power of the Kathmandu-centric unitary state to a federal structure to meet the demands of the various Madhesi as well as Janajati masses. The very idea of restructuring the state emerges from the claims that the resources of the state have been accumulated by a powerful few, and that certain cultural, religious or linguistic traditions belonging to a particular community have been instituted as mainstream and legitimized through successive constitutional and governmental systems. The major claim in the debate is that the very fact of the establishment of the Nepalese nation-state in 1768 is considered as the founding moment of institutional discrimination of a large section of the Nepalese. Both these processes converge on the common goal of restructuring the social and political foundations of the state and society to address the concerns of the alienated and marginalized masses. Different factors such as the rise of identity politics, Maoist insurgency and the global political and financial conditions brought about change in the social and political dynamics of Nepal. Discourse on restructuring of the state along the lines of caste, ethnicity, gender and economy is under

progress been accompanied by an ideological and political anarchy, as discourses on a possible dismantling of the 240-year-old structure, established through the Gorkhali king Prithvi Narayan Shah's consolidation of the Nepalese state, and an establishment of a democratic, inclusive state run the risk of dismantling very foundations on which the modern nation stands.

The historical development of the Nepalese state has been based on alienation of several communities—right from the identification of the kingdom by Prithvi Narayan Shah as "asli Hindusthan" as against the Mughal-ruled India. The attempt of Nepalese rulers, therefore, her been to consolidate Hindu identity by bringing in the fold of the Hindu nation-state the many different indigenous and ethnic groups. Whereas Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723-1775) has been rightly credited for the expansion and consolidation of the Nepalese state after he brought together the clusters of twenty-two and twenty-four principalities spread across spread across the hills across the borders with Gangetic plans and Tibet, the consolidation of the "nation-state" of Nepal as it exists presently happened only after the 1816 signing of the Sughauli Treaty between East India Company and the Nepalese state. According to Mahendra Lawoti, the Nepali rulers of the time attempted to form a nation-state after the conquest of Kathmandu and the other principalities on the basis of Hindu values and norms rather than on political inclusion, equality and justice among various people and nations living within the territory ("State Consolidation and Marginalization" 103). In his essay "Formation of the Concept of Nation-state in Nepal," Richard Burghart has charted out six stages of nation formation in Nepal. Those stages include the demarcation of the border of the nation-state after the signing of the Sughauli

Treaty with the East India Company (1816); the convergence of the realm (core) and possessions' (periphery) boundaries (c. 1816); the designation of Nepali as the official language (c. 1930); the differentiation between kingship and the state (c. 1960); and the construction of a cultural polity (c. 1960). Cultural and national identities in Nepal have been defined in terms dictated by dominant castes and communities, what Harka Gurung calls a "monologue with no voices from below" (496). During the autocratic Rana rule (1846-1951), orthodox Hindu hierarchal order, as envisaged in the Civil Code of 1854, was the basis of political governance and social order. The Code was essentially a caste-based hierarchy that defined or differentiated subjects through divisions such touchable and untouchable, and liquor consuming and non-liquor consuming castes. According to David Gellner, while the hierarchical caste system somehow accommodated the Newars despite the complex hierarchical structure within the Newar community itself, the Madhesi community largely remained outside of the "hill synthesis" ("Caste, Ethnicity and Inequality in Nepal" 1823). The discriminatory Civil Code itself is doubly discriminatory in regards to the Madhesi community, relegating their status a level lower than that of the Pahadi ones.Even though the Madhesi community, with its caste structure not unlike that of the hill groups, remained under the civil code, albeit each step lower than the hill castes.

Although Nepal was not formally colonized by the British, there was especially since 1816, an uneasy relationship between the two powers. The defeat at the hands of the British in the 1814-16 war left Nepal politically volatile. Especially after the rise of the Ranas with the ascent of Jung Bahadur Rana in 1846, Nepal tried to maintain a cordial relationship with first the British and later the Indian establishment. Much of the stability

in Nepal was attained by the Ranas' pleasing of the British at the cost of Nepali exchequer. The fact that the British resident commissioner in Kathmandu was called by various political forces during the Rana rule for settling disputes, and was taken into confidence by one force or another before attempting any major political gamble, helps explain the extent to which the British held arbitrary powers over Nepali political establishment. Dor Bahadur Bista has written of an interesting dimension of patriotism which was not encouraged during the Rana period before 1950. According to Bista, "The orientation of the Ranas was towards furthering the fortunes of their family, not of the country, and patriotism was even regarded suspiciously as a threat to their personal interests" (*Fatalism and Development* 101).

No wonder, then, that when the British colonizers left the subcontinent, Nepal saw the ripple effects of the independence movements that had largely played a part in the ousting of the British. The process of democratization after 1950 was primarily an emulation, even an import, from India, which was also a major source of the very idea of democracy. Having participated in the Indian Independence Movement, leaders such as B P Koirala began a struggle for democracy in Nepal, finally succeeding in 1951 with the ousting of Rana autocracy. In fact, the movement for democracy had been long fought within Nepal, although, of course, there was a longstanding intellectual and political exchange between Nepali and Indian leaders and intellectuals well before 1947. The most useful impetus provided to the Nepali intellectual movement was from Benaras and Calcutta, with publishing possibilities for intellectuals, which was virtually absent or limited to government, in Nepal.

In the nineteen fifties, and especially in the sixties onwards, with the ousting of the Rana autocracy, the process of national integration and "nation building" took a new turn and accelerated rapidly, culminating in the promulgation of the constitution in 1962. When the neighbouring giant, India, was gradually accommodating itself with the ideas of secularism, multi-party democracy and regional distribution of power, Nepal began to go towards the opposite direction with the advent of King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah. Merely a year after the country had elected the first Parliament through democratic elections, King Mahendra organized a coup wherein he incarcerated the prime minister, Bisheshwar Prasad Koirala along with several other parliamentarians. Several other parliamentarians and political activists went into exile in India, even as King Mahendra consolidated his power in a party-less Panchayat system that was to last another thirty years. The most significant act of consolidation of a unitary state came in the form of 1961 (revised in 1962) which envisioned the formation of a Nepalese nation-state. Earlier, political leaders had been active in fostering a sense of nationalism right since the beginning of the century, in their democratic struggle against the Ranas. However, after the 1960's when King Mahendra imposed Panchayat system and institutionalized nationalism in the political discourse, the idea of nationalism itself turned into a hegemonic enterprise. Michael Hutt (1988) writes, "During King Mahendra's direct rule after dissolution of the parliament in 1960 a state-sanctioned official nationalism took shape and was forcefully propagated through all means at the state's disposal, in particular the expanding school system, state radio, and print media (qtd in Chalmers 91). The Panchayati Nepali nationalism undermined the cultural diversity of the country by imposing a pan-national

monolithic identity. As Harka Gurung writes, Nepal has relied on “Indic symbols for national unity” (495). Much of the nation building process in Nepal centred around the creation of a homogeneous national identity through the imposition of a common language and culture peculiar to a particular community, which is the hill Hindus. The common cap worn by the hill people, called the “dhaka topi,” was made the obligatory dress for those entering Kathmandu, and the abysmal number of Hindi speakers in the census of 1970 was made the basis on which Nepalis were distinguished from Indians (Burghart 259). David Gellner writes,

> A shared national identity was supposed to define all Nepalis until 1990. But the kind of national identity that was propagated in schools and through government organizations was experienced as highly exclusionary by lower castes, by ethnic groups (Janajatis), by religious minorities (Buddhists, Muslims, and increasingly now by Christians), and by the people of Indian ethnicity (Madhesi) living in the economically crucial Tarai region in the south of the country. If the period of 1960 to 1990 was one of nation-building, the 17 years since then has been a time of ethnicity-building. (19)

The 1962 constitution “stood on the premise that “Panchayat democracy” was based on Hindu tradition” (Baral 224), and the sovereignty was vested in the king, who projected himself as a reincarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. Nepali came to be considered the *rashtra bhasha* and, and it resulted in the neglect, even suppression of other languages spoken around the country. The use of Nepali as *rashtra bhasha* was influenced by a flawed theory of “one nation” through the adoption of one language and one religion. Nepali received undue privilege at the expense of many other “marginal” languages during

the Panchayat era. The incorporation of Nepali in the nation-building project helped integrate the diverse population towards forming a common national identity, but it also acted as a hegemonic tool for subjectivization and marginalization of a large section of the citizens belonging to linguistic groups other than Nepali. Linguistic homogeneity, combined with caste-based Hindu religion, became the primary ideological status apparatus through which the monarchy generated a sense of legitimacy among the people. The court language became the language of the nation, and the crown and the scepter of the king become the repository of national pride, honor and integrity. The Panchayati nationalist project spread its cultural tentacles of Nepali Language and Hindu religion to reach the marginal areas of the state. Those "marginal" and "peripheral" language groups who tried to maintain their status and subvert the legitimacy of the hegemony of the centralized state were rapidly incorporated into the mainstream, or subdued by it. Such subversive acts caused brought changes in the socio-cultural front, the population of the nation went into a serious identity crisis as their mother tongue, culture and religion were submerged in the nationalist project. According to Pankaj Mishra, "Such hectic nation-building could have lulled Nepal's many ethnic and linguistic communities into a patriotic daze had the project of modernization and development not failed or benefited so exclusively an already privileged elite" (*Temptations* 395). Although Nepal made some progress in terms of literacy, transportation and infant mortality, it was not enough for the burgeoning population of the country (Mishra, *Temptations* 395).

The Panchayat rule (1960-1990), dubbed as "Hawa pani mato suhaudo byabastha" or a rule suited to the soil of the country, featured several programs aimed at nation building

(Gellner 1823). According to Gellner, “Ethnic and caste affiliation were discouraged, in the name of patriotism and nation building” (1823). This was in sharp contrast with the Rana rule when patriotism was seen suspiciously and even discouraged, as it would contradict the interests of the ruling class, which put personal interest in priority rather than nation building. While the idea of a national identity was not a concern of the Ranas (Guneratne xvi), the Panchayat era made the concept of national identity a primary aspect of the process of nation-building. One of the biggest casualties of the flawed nation-building project was the Madhesi community residing in the plains of Nepal. The propaganda of nation-building depended on the narrative construction of a formidable “other.” The building of nation and nationalism depends upon the creation of an “other” outside of the purview of the nation. In the case of Panchayat-era nationalism, India, the Southern giant neighbor was formidable power from which the Nepalese nation was to be protected. Accordingly, the Madhesi community, with their cultural, ethnic and linguistic commonalities with those across the border in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, became the suspicious “other” with an idea of a double “homeland.” The open border between Nepal and India made it easier for the champions of nationalism to present the Madhesi community as potentially disloyal to the Nepalese nation-state, as the community has had historical cultural and familial ties and unrestricted movement across either side of the border. It is this translocal connection of the Madhesi population with those in the bordering states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, in what is famously known as the “roti-beti” relationship that made the Madhesi population came under suspicion of the hill people indoctrinated in anti-India sentiments. The fact that the Madhesis are ethnically and linguistically similar to the Indians across the border rather than the Nepali compatriots in

the hills has compounded their marginalization. The government of the day did not make much effort at bringing the Madhesi population to the fold of popular politics and citizenship. Rather than integrating the Tarai people into the Nepali nation, the *Panchayat* system, according to Guneratne, "only served to alienate [the Madhesis and also the Dalits and the Janajatis in other parts of the country] further from the centre of power in Kathmandu and from identification with the state" (*Regionalism and National Unity* xix). The imposition of a single idea of a nation hit the Madhesis the hardest, with the community, culturally, linguistically and ethnically similar to the Indians across the border, would not come under the definition of the idea of Nepal, leaving a large section of the community with formal citizenship. As Guneratne points out, the two major issues that have fuelled the alienation among the Madhesis are the issues of citizenship and political representation. While the Madhesis find it difficult to obtain citizenship certificates, they have lesser political representation as compared to the more sparsely populated hills, thereby "diluting the weight of the Tarai in national affairs" (Guneratne xxi). The Madhesi community, therefore, fits perfectly in the definition of the native "others." The narrative construction of the Madhesi community as the "other" is based on the idea that the Madhesis' homeland is in Bihar and that their loyalty to Nepal is questionable.

The 1990s saw a different configuration of identity politics in Nepal, with the resurgence of democracy and promulgation of a far more progressive and accommodative 1991 constitution than of 1962. Considered a more progressive and inclusive constitution, the Constitution of 1990 declared Nepal as a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state "despite the hang-over of also calling it a 'Hindu kingdom' " (Gurung 526), and represented a "final

break from the historical model of national integration" (Sharma, *State and Society in Nepal* 212). The decades after 1990 have been the most dramatic ones, with the restoration of multi-party parliamentary democracy, rise of the Maoist insurgency and ethnic politics, monarchy's flirtation with autocracy, and the attempts at re-imagining a new state structure through inclusive democracy and federal restructuring. It was now the age, mostly, of two kinds of movements—the Janajati movement that remained largely active in activist movements and fringe political parties, and the Maoist movement that started with a declared aim of bringing "structural changes" to Nepali political and social structures. Ethnic assertions in Nepal surfaced only in the 1980s and were limited to cultural assertions, and resurfaced as a political force only in the 1990s. Such assertions have been based on the mutual creation and perpetuation of "us" versus "others" in terms of race, values and religions, such as Hindu versus Janajati, indigenous versus non-indigenous, Pahadis versus Madhesis or Mongols versus Aryans (Sharma, "Nation-Building, Multi-Ethnicity, and the Hindu State" 489). At times, the two movements intersected, when a large section of the Janajati population joined the Maoist insurgency.

Ultimately, the Maoist insurgency, which had started as a movement primarily for economic structural changes and abolition of monarchy ended, in 2006, with a more vocal aim of further structural social and political changes especially concerning the participation of Janajati and Dalit populations in Nepali political arena. According to Chaitanya Mishra, "Ethnic, religious, linguistic and regionalist dominance have more recently come to be regarded as a salient cause of the Maoist struggle" (*Essays on the Sociology of Nepal* 117). Chaitanya Mishra writes,

> while the constitutional provisions of the Hindu state and the primacy of the Nepali language sought to suppress pluralism and to *submerge or dwarf* the identity of many of the ethnic and regional groups or members thereof, the severe neglect of the principles and policies of the state as enunciated in the 1990 Constitution—policies related to social protection, promotion of equity and equality among various social groups, selective positive discrimination, devolution and expanded political participation—and the failure to initiate a *political process* fundamentally necessary in order to translate such policies into concrete programs have alienated many constituent social groups and citizens from the 1990 compact. (*Essays* 117).

The aftermath of the 2006 movement saw two major identity groups come forward to demand their rights in the political and social spheres. The first was the Madhesi community, led by political parties including the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum; the second was the Janajati community led mostly by activist groups and backed by the UCPN (Maoist). One of the major contributions of the Janajati movement was to shake off the Hindu hierarchical caste system and carved out of different ethnic groups—primarily based on the claims to indigenous cultural heritage—spearheaded by political parties and activists, including the Mongol National Organization (MNO). The MNO considered several ethnic groups, such as Rais, Limbus and Gurungs, among others, as Mongols who were not to be defined regarding Hindu caste and religious system but as an entirely different racial category (Hangen 49). By disassociating the Janajatis from the Hindu fold, ethnic parties and organizations sought "to end the dominance of high-caste Hindus from the hill regions, who have controlled the state since the unification of Nepal in the late

eighteenth century under a Hindu king" (Hangen 50). However, this has largely remained confined to political activism and is yet to translate into actual practice in the sociocultural domain. The demand for restructuring of the country in federal provinces, especially raised by the Madhesis during the 2007 Madhes movement, and the subsequent demand of the Janajati groups after 2007 in the run up to the drafting of a new constitution through the Constituent Assembly, represented the growing confidence of the marginalized communities. Central to these movements has remained the question: "Who is a Nepali?" Competitive political formations and identity assertions--claiming the rights to equal distribution of state resources and institutionalization of democracy--have fostered around the claim of who is an authentic inhabitant of Nepal and who is a newcomer, or who is an "Adivasi" of a place and who is a settler; who is native and who is an alien, who is a real Madhesi and who is an Indian Madhesi.

In the contemporary socio-political scenario where the hill-centric, Nepali language-specific definition of Nepaliness renders the dhoti-clad, Hindi-, Maithili-, Bhojpuri-speaking Madhesi as 'outsider' or 'Bihari' in his homeland, it is pertinent to see how writers have represented these Madhesis in literary texts. The representation of the Madhesis is limited to writings by Pahade writers, which is evident because of the sheer dominance of this community of writers in the Kathmandu-centric Nepali language publishing scene. So how do these writers represent the Madhesis in their writings? How do Madhesis understand their relationship with the Nepalese state which, as the post-2006 political discourse has emphasized, has long been in the hands of the Khas hill communities? Can the Madhesi speak on his/her own or does he/she need to be spoken of

by the Pahade writer? Can the Pahade's representation of the Madhesi be considered authentic? Does the Pahade writer sufficiently address the issues of the Madhesis? Does the Pahade writer continue to conflate the Madhesi with the Bihari as is the case with a section of his community members? What are the possibilities of restructuring the contemporary canon of Nepali literature given the contemporary changing dynamics of Nepalese politics and society?

Among Nepali writers of the earlier generation, Bisheshwar Prasad (BP) Koirala has written with sensitivity and profound knowledge of the Nepalese Madhes/Tarai, which extends, in his writings, seamlessly to the Indian cities and towns of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states, including Benares and Darbhanga. The seamlessness with which Koirala's characters move in either side of the border speaks of the way in which the divide of nation-states becomes negligent on societies where common culture, language and ethnicity bring communities together. Such seamlessness is evident in Koirala's novels such as *Narendra Dai* and *Modiain*. Madhesi and Tharu characters intersperse in his novels as essential parts of the narrative—although the class and cultural hierarchy between the Pahade and the Madhesi characters is visible. Koirala's female characters, such as Munariya in *Narendra Dai* and Faguni in his long-short story *Swetbhairavi* are both objects of Pahade male sexual desire as well as agents who facilitate sexual experience and liberation of the Pahade males. If there is a racial/ethnic hierarchy between the Pahade and the Madhesi population, Koirala's writings show that they are intrinsically involved with one another concerning economic and social relations.

The divide between the Pahade and the Madhesi population has found expression in the writings of Dhruba Chandra Gautam and Nayan Raj Pandey, both of Pahade background who live in the Madhesh. Their writings represent the Madhesis vis-a-vis the imagination of the Nepali nation as native "others" whose legitimate claims to the state as natives are unquestionable but remain 'othered' by the Pahade community and the Pahade-centric nationalist claims. Their novels interrogate the ideas of 'home', 'nation' and 'Nepaliness' through the representation of Madhesis, offering differing readings of the relationships between Pahade and Madhesi communities, interrogating the concepts of belonging and dislocation among Madhesis. In Nayan Raj Pandey's Nepali-language novel *Ulaar*, Premlalwa, a Madhesi tonga rider from the plains city of Nepalgunj, travels to Kathmandu to ask for compensation from a Pahadi leader whose election victory rally causes the death of his pony. Premlalwa becomes aware of his identity as a poor, helpless figure throughout his four-day stay in Kathmandu, which he feels "did not welcome him well enough,"[20] and that he should not have come to Kathmandu at all. Upon asking the way to the minister's residence, he is responded to by a Pahade tea vendor thus: "This way, you fucking Madhesi." As a subaltern Madhesi, Premlalwa becomes an easy victim of economic and emotional exploitation at the hands of Pahade leaders and landlords.

The domination of the Pahade community in the Nepalese Tarai is represented in *Ulaar* by the exploitation and dislocation of Premlalwa's family by local Pahade leaders such as Rajendra Raj Sharma and Shanti Raja. The dislocation of Premlalwa's family from Nepalgunj's city centre to the periphery represents the historical marginalization of the Madhesi population by the Pahade landlords, aided by the state's concerted efforts at

20 Unpublished translation of Nayan Raj Pandey's novel *Ulaar.*

fostering Nepali national identity. After a futile journey to Kathmandu to receive compensation for the death of his pony, Premlalwa returns to his hometown to find that his home has been destroyed by rain and all his belongings burgled. The loss of his home, however, makes Premlalwa reckon the historical dislocation and homelessness perpetrated on his family since several generations by the powerful. Premlalwa makes a final decision to sell his land and move further to the periphery but decides to build a new home for himself and his beloved prostitute. Moreover, he decides not to allow the likes of Rajendra Raj Sharma on his *tanga*. In this sense, Premlalwa's act is that of subversion of the moral codes of the society as well as the domination of the powerful.

There are few writers from the Madhesi community writing in Nepali, and the Nepali language dominates the Kathmandu-based publishing industry. Writings in languages other than Nepali make little impact in a country dominated by Nepali in all domains of social and political life means that voices from minority languages rarely get the space they deserve. The domination of Nepali language is such that even those writers considered ethnolinguistic activists—such as Rajan Mukarung and Shrawan Mukarung to name just a couple of them—have published most of their writings in Nepali just so that their voices are "understood by those who need to understand."[21]

Writings published after the turn of the century have especially responded well to the political, cultural and social changes in Nepal. The year 2005 is considered a landmark

21 During a panel discussion "Baagi Bichar" at the Nepal Literature Festival, 2017, Rajan Mukarung claimed that he wrote in Nepali—and not his native Limbu language—because his primary audience is the Nepali-speaking audience of Nepal.

when Nepa~laya, a new publishing house, published *Palpasa Cafe* by Narayan Wagle to much fanfare. The novel was a runaway hit, having sold over 50,000 copies according to the publisher's claims. In the following years, some major publishing houses such as FinePrint and Shangri-La started grooming and publishing new writers. As a result, the Nepali literary scene has found new voices who represent the ongoing democratic process as well as socio-cultural changes in Nepal. One of the important categories of writing to have emerged in the period is the Insurgency literature, representing the Maoist insurgency through various perspectives. Of these, Yug Pathak's *Urgenko Ghoda* (Urgen's Horse) is a prime example. Pathak's novel dwells on the question of historical dislocation of an ethnic community due to the nation-building practices in Nepal, and a female insurgent's struggle to restore the history of her community through an armed insurgency.

An important characteristic that defines Nepali literature is the seamlessness with which writings from either side of the border--in particular between Nepal and Darjeeling/Sikkim are considered the canon of Nepali literature. Those writers include Indra Bahadur Rai, Parijat, and Lil Bahadur Chhetri, to name a few. What is important is that Kathmandu had remained the centre of publication of Nepali writings especially after the 1960s (earlier, Banaras was the centre, before presses started to publish in Nepal after the dawn of democracy in 1950). Whereas Nepali language literature has made its niche in India, it has a broad readership in Nepal. Some of the themes of Nepali literature from both sides include migration out of Nepal and the trials and tribulations of Nepali migrants in Mugalan, themes that writers from both sides of the open border have dealt with extensively. Writing from either side of the "open" border are pre-occupied with

experiences of dislocation, migration, of leaving home and trying to make a home in new homelands.[22]

Prema: A Reluctant Diasporic

In *Seasons of Flight*, Manjushree Thapa has weaved together two strands of post-1990 Nepali society, represented by Prema, the protagonist, and her younger sister, Bijaya. Prema, a young Nepali conservationist, moves to America after winning the American diversity visa lottery, and negotiates terms of home, belonging and dislocation in her adopted homeland. Hailing from a small village in Eastern Nepal, and working in a small town infiltrated by Maoist insurgents, Prema, while in Nepal, longs for freedom from the mundane way of life in a country undergoing insurgency. Even before Prema leaves for America Bijaya joins the Maoist insurgency, inspired by the propaganda to change the fate of the country. The exchange between the two sisters opens up the fault lines of the prospects and pitfalls of democracy in Nepal. Early on in the novel, Bijaya tells Prema, "I hate where we come from." (….). Bijaya's humiliation also repeats in the case of Prema, when she has to call India her home, because her own country, Nepal, is hardly in the imagination of her interlocutors. Embedded in Bijaya's statement is the humiliation of belonging to a poor society in a poor country. The narrator says,

> That was Prema's life in Nepal. There was nothing really wrong with it. Though the country was at war, she was safe. Had it been in her power, she would have changed a few things, of course. She might have lived in a

22 See Michael Hutt's *Mountain Echoes* and Mallika Shakya's "Reading Parijat and BP Koirala" for detailed analyses of Nepali writings on the theme of migration and border thinking.

> town rather than in a bazaar, a town large enough to have a cinema, and shops, and restaurants of the kind she and her friends used to go to in college. She might have had more like-minded friends for company. She might have been more—free. (Thapa 10).

The fact that Prema fills up the DV lottery not out of her wish to relocate to America, as many Nepalis do, but because of the insistence of Kanchha, the telephone operator, shows that her emigration to America is not inspired by a chase for the American dream. Rather, her only desire is to bring some change in her life, to get away from her life conditions and that of the surrounding. On the one hand, people are caught in the crossfire between the state and the Maoists, in a country that is perpetually poor and "third world," and on the other, there is also a prospect of upward mobility in America where she has been invited through a DV lottery. So the pull of the "first world" is greater than the pull of the nation, which holds little for the young. So Prema considers: "America was rich, it was--proper, solid. But wasn't it also --an agent of corporate capitalist expansionism? What would she do there? What would she do here, though?" (51). For Prema, thus, "Both options felt wrong" (51).

Prema's initial reluctance to harbor nostalgia about the country she has left behind speaks of the way in which her homeland has become less worthy of habitation, because, mostly, of the ongoing insurgency, compounded by the fact of the poverty of the country. Prema is an exile at home itself. She is advised against going home by her father, as there is a fear that she may be taken away by the Maoists to join the "peoples' war," just as her sister, sixteen-year old Bijaya, was taken away. As the narrative voice says, "Month after

month, when she had telephoned home, her father had advised her not to visit. Years passed. She did not go back" (4). Moreover, the fact that she has to explain the existence of Nepal as a country vis-a-vis the reference of India—as her interlocutors have never heard about Nepal—makes her self-aware of lack of existence of her country in the foreign land.

The advent of the Maoist insurgency, which left the country reeling under political turmoil and stagnant economic growth, contributed immensely to the exodus of youth from the country, most of them working in the Gulf and Southeast Asian labor markets, and the West. The latter aspect, what is called the "brain drain" has shown that it is not only the immediate need for sustenance but also for better opportunities that the youth of the country are leaving for abroad. Thapa's protagonist, Prema, does not fit into both the categories and remains in the interstitial space in America. She has a well-paying job in the conservation sector in Nepal and is quite happy with her life until she gets the DV lottery she filled up not because of her interest but on the pestering of a telephone operator. In that sense, Prema is someone who is not aware of the need to go out and make changes to her lifestyle, but also at the same time takes the impulsive decision to leave home for America. Her journey to America, thus, is quite unlike that of other protagonists discussed in this thesis. She is not one of the displaced persons like Yashodhara in Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, nor is she an illegal immigrant in America like Biju in Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. She changes one job after another like Biju, but while Biju chases the elusive green card, Prema is already privileged to have one. While Biju cannot return home to India without getting a green

card, Prema, on the other hand, has the possibility and agency to return home to Nepal "if it came to that." But her return would still not be like that of Raheen in *Kartography*, as Raheen's return home is facilitated by her upper-class mobility and the pull of the homeland. Prema is, thus, someone who has left her home behind but has not "reached" out there yet. Prema's search, rather, is for permanence and belonging, which is equally elusive in America. Prema cuts off contact with home (96). One of the reasons Prema feels distanced from her family and country is the war. She is troubled by the effects of war when her sister, Bijaya, is taken away by the Maoists on the one hand, and the telephone operator, Kanchha, is taken away by the army. This has also to do with the fact that she comes from a poor Nepali village, with limited means, so much so that her sister, Bijaya, says, " 'I hate where we're from.' " (31). So, even when she is aware that she has abandoned her father and her sister "to their broken fates" (96), she stops calling home. Moreover, she stops looking up for news about Nepal, but rather begins looking up for news about America in newspapers, and all she is concerned about is to "reach" America.

Prema's struggle in America in the initial years is to "reach" America. She finds that "[h]er compatriots spoke in the Nepali language among themselves; and their talk invariably turned homeward: the Maoist rebels, the king, and the army, the faltering movement for peace. They talked of Americans-- 'foreigners'--with some perplexity" (92). Neeru Didi, with whom Prema stays in America in the initial days after reaching America, advises Prema to " 'Always say thank you to foreigners,' " by which she means Americans (91). Being foreigners themselves, those like Neeru call Americans as "foreigners," and remain suspicious of other migrants and foreigners such as Mexicans,

Chinese or Koreans. The calling of Americans, and also immigrants from other countries by Niru Didi and her friends signifies, for Prema, that Didi and others have not "reached" America yet, as they are still unable to think of the others as compatriots. Rather, for them, America is yet another place of dwelling where they have not found their footing yet. In contrast, Prema is aware of her position as an immigrant who could find her footing in America, of being inducted into the American society. Her attempt to leave "Little Nepal" behind and move towards a place considerably far away from Little Nepal. Prema thinks of herself as lucky to have left Nepal and have escaped the trouble caused by the war. It is the thought of the problems brought by the war that Prema feels no special ties with her homeland. But then Prema's attempts at leaving home behind is a performative act which she has to do deliberately. "Home," for Prema, is still in Nepal. Prema's quest is for a sense of belonging. It is this loss of the sense of belonging that Prema finds lacking in her, whether in Nepal or America. Initially, Luis comes across as fulfilling that gap, but soon she realizes that there are so many cultural differences with Luis that the possibility of bridging that gap is not so easy. It is with this realization that she contemplates on the idea of home. When she feels she has "reached" America, it "just keeps unfolding" (162), leading to several episodes of running away from Luis and herself. Her sexual adventures in America allow her to make her choices and find her calling, which is different from her life in Nepal, where her sexual encounters with her partner, Rajan, are all done in secrecy and pretension in front of the society. It is by liberating herself physically from the social norm that she follows back in Nepal that she finds herself inching closer to finding herself. Reaching America is, in a sense, her attempt to leave her home behind. The experience of diaspora and transnational

individuals could not be understood in terms of the strict distinction between the native and the settler, or the migrant and the resident. Because the identity of such individuals is to be found in the interstitial spaces between such binaries. According to Ashcroft et al., "The problem with such binary system is that they suppress ambiguous or interstitial spaces between the opposed categories so that any overlapping region that may appear...becomes impossible according to binary logic, and a region of taboo and social experience" (Ashcroft et al. 18).

Initially, in America, Prema is not even nostalgic about Nepali food--Daal-bhat--, which is otherwise the way in which South Asian diaspora consider their belongingness with their home country. If diaspora identity is measured in terms of memory of food, then Prema is not yet a diaspora individual. Prema's attempt, rather, is towards leaving her past behind, and the thought of home is a rare incident in the life of Prema. So she could very well be considered as someone who can belong everywhere and nowhere at the same time. She is not a typical diaspora figure that some theorists imagine--as someone who has a homeland in her mind. Prema chooses to not hark back to the memories of her homeland, which is evident in the fact that she does not stay in touch with her father for years after reaching America. Although she has a home and a family--consisting of her father and her sister--she does not feel the pull of her homeland. So, the fabled diasporic longing of the homeland is not part of Prema's identity. (In a way, Prema is a self-imposed exile who does not harbor a dream of returning to her homeland.) So much so that she does not so much as discuss the political situation back home, So, when Luis asks

her if she doesn't "want to go back even for a visiting", she simply replies in the negative, and then waits for the topic to pass (71).

The need to re-iterate where one comes from, where one belongs "originally," is one of the major concerns of discourses on nationalism. What you are at present is ultimately dependent on where you have come from. The fact that an individual comes out of the mother's womb is of no consequence. It is the social, geographical identity that matters more than one's biological origin. This is what Prema goes through in America when she is asked where she is "originally" from. More than the question of her "original" inhabitation, the fact that the inquisitor does not know about native country, Nepal, is more troubling for Prema, as she has to give them other subsidiary answers such as " 'It is near India,' or 'Where Mount Everest is,' or 'You have heard of the Sherpas?' (1). The question of "Where are you from" is something that, for Prema, does not have an answer, or the answer is ambivalent at best.

In Thapa's another novel *All of Us in Our Own Lives*, Ava finds herself unable to decide if she wants to know her family history when she realizes that needs to find out what her caste is. For her, getting to know the caste in which she was born, may lead to her getting to know about herself and her old homeland better. So she asks her friend, Gyanu, "Can you tell, Gyanu, from looking at me, what caste I was born as?" (209). The way in which she begins to pronounce her name the Nepali way, as "Abha," points to the gradual transformation she goes through during her stay in Nepal. In changing the pronunciation of her name, and in trying to find out about her caste, Ava re-establishes a sense of belonging

with her former homeland. Unlike Prema in *Seasons in Flight*, Ava finds herself coming closer to the Nepali society even as she engages with the welfare of Nepali women as part of an aid agency. As much as the need to get away from her marriage in Canada, Ava gradually begins to find her purpose in helping Nepali women become entrepreneurs. Ava's quest is fuelled by the understanding that she, too, could have been born into an impoverished family unable to provide for themselves, not unlike the families she meets during her field trip in Western Nepal. In this way, Ava's concern is that of Prema, the only difference being that whereas the former tries to stay back in Nepal and work for the betterment of others, the latter finds herself willing to escape the situation. The financial, material conditions of the two characters show why they have differing attitudes on a similar situation: whereas Ava is financially independent and has stronger agency to bring about change in the lives of others, the fact that Prema has limited means makes her find an escape for herself, as she does not have agency comparable to that of Ava. Manjushree Thapa's political convictions have found expression in the novel *All of Us in Our Own Lives* in which her protagonist, Ava, engages deeply with the issue of women's empowerment and inclusion. Thapa is also aware of, and exposes, the inherent contradictions of the aid industry in Nepal, which works almost as a parallel state in Nepal and helps form political as well as social discourses, and has done little to change the lives of the common people for the better. Thapa's another protagonist, Indira Sharma, a local feminist and NGO worker with high ambitions, represents the Kathmandu upper-middle class elite that sustains the juggernaut of the aid industry in a perpetually volatile social and political condition of a third world country such as Nepal. Thapa has presented herself as a staunch advocate of democratic politics and inclusive democracy in Nepal and has

actively participated as a member of the civil society, especially during the April 2006 Movement launched by political parties to destabilize monarchy. Particularly in the aftermath of the promulgation of a new constitution in 2015, Thapa has come under public criticism for having burnt a copy of the Constitution, which she claimed was discriminatory against women, including discrimination against women in regards to a mother's rights to give her children citizenship through her name. Thapa has since taken a Canadian citizenship, much to the chagrin of a section of Nepali intellectuals and the public who denounced her purported renouncing of her homeland, although she has reiterated her loyalty to Nepal as her homeland**.**

Belonging and longing

Prema is someone who cannot "belong." She can belong only to her self. Even her relationship is something to which she is unattached. So when she gets into a relationship, she has no remorse for the one she has left behind. So when she gets a DV lottery to the US, she does not invite her lover, Rajan, to join. Her successive relationships also turn out to be those in which she feels discontent after a point of time and wants to run away, even though she dreads the thought of leaving. The narrative voice says, "Rajan and Prema continued to go to the Maya Lodge every few weeks. They would make love as before and lie in bed talking as though nothing had changed between them. Yet the thought-- 'I am leaving'--was akin to awareness of an impending death" (45). Rather, she believes her new relationship with Luis to be "a reward for having left her past and reinvented herself" (80). But when Luis talks of the possibility of traversing cultural and national barriers just to become "*us*," Prema is unsure of such traversal. Prema. Rather, is someone who lives

at the moment, and not the past or the future. Inconsistent and detached, Prema finds that the relationship she got into with Luis is “a mistake. Someone as jagged and unmade as she: how could she fit into the format of a relationship, American or Nepali?” (207).

Prema finds no particular attachment to any place and is not nostalgic about the places she has left behind. She even makes sure to leave “Little Nepal” in America, as she believes that for her to “reach” America, she has to leave the limited company of her compatriots. For her, America is all about loneliness, being among outsiders. “To reach America” is her only goal upon landing in America. And Prema’s life in America is bound by this desire. For her, she has to “[g]et as far away as she could from her past” (102). As the narrator explains, Prema is

> Feeling something. Not homesick, but something like it. She missed something. Not her compatriots. Her compatriots, she could return to in Little Nepal. She could even go back to Nepal if it came to that. That was not what she missed. What, then? (106).

To “reach” America, Prema considers that she first needs to “leave” Nepal, whether literally, or metaphorically, in terms of memory of the country and her compatriots in America. Prema’s being in America, what she calls “reaching,” is complete only when she is with an American and not with a Nepali. If a common feature of the diaspora life is the memorialization or harping of the former homeland, Prema is quite un-diasporic. Prema’s relationship with her language, Nepali, in America is ambivalent. Whereas she avoids meeting and speaking with Nepalis for years, she also considers it “the language of her sorrows” (167) when, at last, she wanders again after years to “Little Nepal.” Even when

her boyfriend, Luis, reads and tries to discuss the contemporary political scenario in Nepal, Prema shows no such interest and simply avoids the discussion. When Luis asks her to take him to her world, Prema responds: " 'I do not have a world! ... I left the world I had, and do not belong in the one I am in now--your world. I do not have any place to take you, Luis. I do not have a place in the world' " (186). Furthermore, she needs to make American friends to "reach" America. This is also the reason why, when inquired where she is from, she responds by saying "India." Compounded with the humiliation of having her interlocutors unaware of her country is Prema's quest to leave her country behind, hence her claim of India being her home. Prema's forte, thus, is leave taking, and not belonging to any place or person.

Ultimately, Prema is not able to leave her past behind even if she wants to. She carries with her the memory of her mother through the ammonite that she has taken from her mother's worshiping altar at home. "Her only memento from home was an ammonite, a lustrous stone the colour of shale, the shape of a lopsided egg. A fossil of marine life from when the himals were below the sea, millennia ago" (2). Even as she wanders trying to, unsuccessfully, belong to a place or persons, Prema clings to the ammonite that she has taken from her late mother's place of worship. This is a testimony to the fact that Prema is at heart someone who still wants to hold on to her native identity, to her mother's memory and also to her homeland where the ammonite, usually called Shaligram by Hindus, is considered an auspicious object that represents a human connection with nature through mythology. Her sticking to the amulet, and also her finding herself of having reached America through butterflies means that Prema has her real "home" in nature. So it is not

by leaving home behind, but by keeping the memory of home alive that Prema is finally able to find her footing in America. Through Prema, thus, Thapa establishes an ethics of transnational belonging where you could belong to both home and new residencies, and that for one to belong to one place, it is not necessary to leave the other behind. Prema's struggles to belong to both home and abroad at once is what Anthony Appiah has called "rooted cosmopolitanism."

It is also through finding herself at home in nature, among butterflies in Los Angeles Conservatory, that Prema finds herself to have "reached" America in a real sense. In doing so, Prema defies national identity and national belonging and expands her attachment to concerns of environmental conservation. Her location is, therefore, not in the realm of the nation-state but in that of translocal localities—it is the concern for nature and conservation that she finds herself at home, whether it is Eastern Nepal or the Los Angeles wetlands.

This chapter attempted to examine Manjushree Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight* in the light of political and social changes in modern Nepal, and the effects of such changes in the way citizens of Nepal negotiate their terms of engagement and belonging with their homeland. It showed that Prema's identity as a reluctant diaspora in America emerges out of her disappointment about her homeland's minuscule presence in the global map, and the need to identify herself as a citizen of a neighboring country to locate her identity for the convenience of her interlocutors.

CHAPTER SIX

Eelam and its Illusions: Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*

> If there is discrimination in this land which is not their Tamil homeland...Why not go back to India...?
>
> (*Island of a Thousand Mirrors* 76)

Through a critical analysis of Nayomi Munaweera's novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* (2013), this chapter examines how issues of language, territory, and religion become tools for competing claims of home and belonging by Tamil and Sinhala communities in post-independence Sri Lanka. By using Munaweera's representation of cross-cultural solidarity between individuals and communities in the wake of the Sri Lankan insurgency, it presents a case for developing an ethics of recognition and co-existence of difference and otherness in forging a shared idea of nationhood.

Sri Lanka: the nation and its discontents

Sri Lanka's diversity of language, ethnicity, and religion, a trait that the country shares with much of its South Asian neighbors, has largely been a bane rather than a boon as it has struggled through most of its post-independence period.[23] The failure to recognize the

23 The population ratio according to the 1981, which the decade which saw the emergence of a full-fledged LTTE insurgency, was the following: out of the

diversity of its constituents has meant that the translation of the catchphrase “unity in diversity” into practice in the constitutional and social arenas, has largely remained unfulfilled. The animosity primarily between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, and between these groups and other minorities such as Muslims, Burghers, and Christians, originate from the failure of accommodation of diverse identities during colonial through post-independence Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan discourse on citizenship and nationalism has been fraught with competing claims of nativity and belonging, and the politics of minority nationalism, as is manifest in the hostility between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The Tamil-Sinhala conflict, K M de Silva points out, was “between a majority with a minority complex, and a minority with a yearning for majority status, a minority with a majority complex” (“Reaping the Whirlwind,” qtd in Salgado 31). De Silva’s comment, while it shows the complexity of the struggle between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, it is also essentializing of the Tamil aspirations for access to state resources and the idea of a nation in post-independent Sri Lanka.

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population of 14,850,001, 74.0 percent Sinhalese; 12.6 percent Sri Lankan Tamils; 5.5 percent Indian Tamils (also called up-country/hill-country Tamils), 7.1 percent Moors; 0.3 percent Burghers; 0.3 percent Malays; and 0.2 percent were others. Similarly, 69 percent were Buddhists, 15.5 percent were Hindus (Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils combined), 7.6 percent were Muslims (Ceylon Moors, Tamil Muslims, and Malays combined), 7.5 percent were Christians (Sinhalese, Sri Lankan Tamils, Indian Tamils, and Burghers combined). Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 18, No 39 (Sept 24, 1983), p. 1657.

There are two major narratives through which both the Sinhalese and the Tamils present their competing claims to the nation, through the propagation of otherness against each other. In the Sinhalese narrative, Tamils are portrayed as Indian immigrants who have overstayed in Sri Lanka, thereby questioning their loyalty to the country. Also embedded in such propagation of otherness is the Sinhalese autochthonic claims of them being the "natives" of the country against the "newcomer" Tamils. Such autochthonic claims are supplemented by the claims of Buddhism being superior and native religion in Sri Lanka, as against Hinduism mostly practiced the Tamils. The Sinhalese being the dominant community are seen disseminating narratives of racial superiority against the minority Tamils, among other minorities. In his essay "Transformations in Sinhala nationalism," Sankajaya Nanayakkara has examined two phases in pre-independence Sri Lanka that gave rise to Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. According to Nanayakkara, the first phase was the 19th-century Buddhist revival which initially took the form of anti-colonial nationalism. The second phase was the proliferation of Sinhala organizations in the 1930s through the 1950s, most important being the establishment of the Sinhala Mahasabha (SMS) in 1936. The SMS consolidated nation-wide expressions of Sinhalese ethnic interests and fostered a pan-Lankan nationalism (Nanayakkara 2016, 51). The historical development and reformulation of Sinhala ethnic identity and its distancing from the Arya-Sinhala identity to Buddhist identity thus made Sinhala Buddhist nationalism exclusionary. Secondly, the Tamils' quest for representation in the polity and recognition of their linguistic rights is interpreted by the Sinhalese as attempts at a bifurcation of the state. Scholars have argued that the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism has fulfilled exactly such a project of creating an "other" out of the minority communities. The Tamils,

especially those living in the northern and the eastern parts of the country, claim their belonging regarding their inhabitation that dates back to even earlier than the Sinhalese. The identity of the Hill Tamils, or the Indian Tamils, who had been translocated to the Sri Lankan hill tea estates during the British Raj, with almost 40 percent of them deported to India in the wake of the independence, and the remaining ones provided citizenship, have largely remained distanced from these competing claims to the nation.

The disenfranchisement of the Tamils in post-independence Sri Lanka began right after the independence, with the citizenship act of 1949, which deprives of Tamils believed of Indian origin from citizenship. The disenfranchisement was further consolidated after 1956 when Solomon Bandaranaike came to power riding on the wave of Sinhalese nationalism and made Sinhala the only official language and introduced other measures to bolster Sinhalese and Buddhist sentiments (BBC, “Sri Lanka profile"). In the widespread protest that ensued, more than 100 Tamils were killed. Over 200 Tamils were killed and thousands displaced in during the anti-Tamil riots in 1958. Solomon Bandaranaike was assassinated by a Buddhist monk in 1959, after which his widow, Srimavo, took over and bolstered Sinhalese nationalism. The election of the United National Party in 1965 caused a temporary halt in the process, but with the re-election of Srimavo in 1970, the process was resumed again. The introduction of Buddhism as the country’s primary religion further agonized the predominantly Hindu Tamil population (BBC, “Sri Lanka profile”). Of the various communities that felt left out of the homogeneous idea of a Sri Lankan nation, the Tamils, who form the “native other” or a significant minority in the country, consolidated themselves around the idea of a Tamil homeland.

No wonder, then, that one of the most virulent and violent manifestations of ethnonational aspirations for establishing a separate homeland within or outside existing structure of the nation-state was seen in post-independence Sri Lanka, which faced a 26-year long insurgency waged by separatist Tamils between 1983 and 2009, along with several other insurrections including the ones in the early 1970s and the late 1980s. The year 1976, when Velupillai Prabhakaran, a Tamil activist, formed Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as an insurgent group and started a separatist movement in the northern and eastern parts of the country, has been considered as the defining moment in Sri Lankan history. Prabhakaran's emergence as the leader of the Tamil cause, promoting as he did the idea of a Tamil homeland, heralded the rise of a counter-narrative of the nation against the Sinhalese. The following year, the separatist front, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) won all seats in the Tamil-dominated areas, which was followed by the further killing of 100 Tamils in anti-Tamil riots. The 1978 constitution, which once again reinforced the Sinhala-only provision, further alienated the Tamils.[24] In 1981, Sinhala policemen allegedly burnt down the Jaffna public library, which further escalated animosity between the Sinhalese and the Tamil population. The most significant rupture came in 1983 when LTTE ambush killed 13 soldiers, and in the anti-Tamil backlash that ensued, hundreds of Tamils were killed. It was then that the LTTE declared the "First Eelam War." The first peace negotiations between the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE in 1985 failed after which the government escalated its offensive against the rebels.

24 Tamil was eventually included as an official language almost a decade later, in 1987, but by then, the LTTE movement had already grown too big to be contained by such a provision.

The “Second Eelam War” began in the wake of the disastrous involvement of the Indian Army on the invitation of the Sri Lankan government. The “Third Eelam War” began in 1995 after the Tamils destroyed the naval craft, and the war escalated in northern and eastern parts of the country. The Tamil Tigers and the government signed for a ceasefire in 2002, but the Tigers pulled out of the talks in 2003. In August 2005, a state of emergency was declared after the incumbent foreign minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, an ethnic Tamil opposed to the LTTE insurgency, was killed by a suspected Tiger assassin. In November that year, Mahinda Rajapaksha, the prime minister of Sri Lanka, won presidential elections and came to power, vowing to end the war. After massive offensive from the government forces, the Tigers were driven out of their eastern strongholds. Subsequently, hundreds of Tamils living in Colombo also fled to other parts of the country. In May 2009, with the killing of Prabhakaran by the military, the government declared defeat of the Tamil Tigers, which was followed by the statement of the Tigers that they had laid down their arms (BBC).

With Sri Lanka having undergone the turmoil of armed insurgency for close to three decades, there has been a proliferation of literary production dealing with the war from various perspectives, which include, but are not limited to, writings that explore the perspectives of Tamil, Sinhala, and Burgher identities. The politics of identity is deeply rooted in the literary and cultural production in Sri Lanka, as is also seen in the case of both Sri Lankan and diaspora writers. Chelva Kanaganayakam, argues that the emphasis on “indigenous” languages such as Sinhala and Tamil has hindered the growth of anglophone writing in Sri Lanka, leading to Sri Lankan literature in English being

relegated only to footnotes in Indian writing in English. According to Chelva, “serious and accomplished” writing in English came relatively late, in the 1980s. There are yet other “categories” that distinguish writers according to the issues they write about as well as their own identities vis-a-vis communal identities. This has to do with the politics and position of anglophone writers who themselves negotiate terms not only of the world and the home but also that of being strangers at home. Minoli Salgado has made significant observations on the two sets of writers writing on contemporary Sri Lanka—the expatriate Sri Lankan writers and the “home” writers. Salgado’s observations help understand the different domains in which cultural productions take shape. Minoli Salgado has commented that Sri Lankan literature in English “occupies an uncertain territory, which, in recent years, has itself been marked by the competing ethnic nationalisms of civil war and of contestatory constructions of home and belonging” (9). Salgado further writes,

> The literature ’of’ Sri Lanka (and what a burden of significance this small word carries) can thus be subject to conscription on the basis of contested notions of belonging in which ’home’ and ’homeland’ stand as symbolic markers of inclusion and exclusion...texts from both inside and outside the country reflect complex negotiations of territory and identity and reformulations of the constructions of the insider and outsider which intersect with—and can entrench or challenge—cultural formulations of national identity and belonging. (12-13)

Similarly, Shyam Selvadurai has identified three main perspectives through which experiences of alienation and displacement vis-a-vis the concept of home have been

presented in Sri Lankan literature—internal migration and displacement, international migration, and return to homeland (Selvadurai 2014, 225). Isankya Kodithuwakku's story "The House in Jaffna" narrates the Nadarajah family's homebound return journey from London during the ceasefire in the early 2000s, and their eventual disillusionment and go back to London again. The excitement of homecoming fades as soon as the family reaches their dilapidated house in Jaffna, not because of the physical ruin of the house but because the fabric of secularism and harmony that had been part of their lives before the war between Tamil and Sinhala communities had been disturbed for ever. In Anil's Ghost, Anil Tissera, a forensic expert, returns home on a UN human rights mission to investigate an archaeological site for evidence of mass killings, finds herself in an ambiguous position as both an insider and outsider. Whereas she is commissioned by a purportedly neutral international agency, and that the government reluctantly accepts her presence, she cannot resist her emotional attachment to the land of her birth. Her identity as a "native other" comes into play when she is viewed suspiciously, but also as a possible traitor as she has returned to examine, investigate and publicize her country's secrets to the outside world.

Identity politics thrives on the narrative construction of a common national or ethnic enemy. Scholars such as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon have sufficiently explored how intellectual and linguistic discourses help in the construction of the oriental and racial other. Homi Bhabha has also written that "An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 94). In Sri Lanka, there are yet other ethnic communities that have peculiar issues with identity formation and assertion, such as that of the

Burghers. The case of Sri Lankan Burghers is a peculiar one even among what I have identified as native "others." While for Sri Lankan Tamils and Pakistani Muhajirs they have no home than where they live at present, the Burghers consider Sri Lanka as otherwise than home. In Sri Lanka, Burghers consider themselves outsiders, although they have stayed there for centuries, and again, they have no home as such to return. According to Charles Sarvan "The Burghers themselves, despite the centuries, are outsiders, that Ceylon is not their true home—though it is the only home they have ever known" (529). Sarvan further writes that "The Burghers in ethnic, political, and cultural term occupied not so much a homeland as a nebulous borderland; they were a liminal people, neither there, nor here, fully at home within their created Burgherhood" (530).

The liminality of Burgher identity is the subject of Jean Arasanayagam's novel *The Outsider*, which narrates the story of multiple dislocations of a Burgher woman who, being already dislocated as a Burgher, faces another dislocation as faces rejection by in-laws in the home of her Tamil husband. Arasanayagam's own personal history of multiple dislocations—as a Burgher in Sri Lankan society, as a Burgher daughter-in-law unaccepted by her husband's Tamil family, and a Burgher-Tamil briefly living in a Tamil camp in the wake of the 1983 riots is emblematic of the alienations and dislocations that a "native other" faces in contemporary South Asian society. Another significant novel that delves into the violence of 1983 and its aftermath is Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, in which its protagonist Arjee has to deal with several losses. He loses his family home during the riots, he loses his touch with his language his father sends him to a common school where the dominant language is Sinhala, and also loses his subjectivity as a queer person, as he is

expected to perform certain gender roles ascribed to males. Seeing violence all around, he longs to get out of his country. Arjee says, “I don’t feel at home in Sri Lanka any longer, will never feel safe again” (Selvadurai 308). His story, thus, as Charles Sarvan aptly puts it, is a “successive loss of different homes” (Sarvan 115). Sarvan argues that for some, ’home’ may mean only the inner domain of the self—corporeal and mental—but then also, “our inner home is affected, if not conditioned, by outer historic, ethnic and cultural factors” (Sarvan 117).

Munaweera’s *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* is a vivid narrative that, as the title itself shows, holds the mirror to the society devastated by armed insurgency and ethnic divisions in a multicultural society. In that sense, it holds an image of a war-torn Sri Lankan society in a broken mirror that shows multiple images of the same object. The novel is told through two protagonists who hold the mirror to the Sri Lankan society through two different angles, but ultimately the mirror shows the same image of a broken society. The novel is, in fact, a bildungsroman of two protagonists whose formative years are shadowed by the growing violence across the country following the spread of the LTTE insurgency in the aftermath of the 1983 Colombo riots. The novel dwells on the longstanding divide between the Sinhalese and Tamils through the two protagonists—Yashodhara represents the Sinhalese and Saraswathi the Tamil narrative. The way the novel is divided into two narratives, with the bigger first half dedicated solely to Yashodhara telling the narrative of the Sinhalese, and the shorter, second half divided between Yashodhara and Saraswathi, it seems as though the narrative itself is divided in terms of proportional representation of the Sinhalese and the Tamil population in the country. The first strand of the narrative, told

by Yashodhara, paints a picture of conflict-stricken Colombo with the riots of 1983 as the pivot. Yashodhara tells the story of three generation of her family, in which her maternal grandmother, Sylvia Sunethra, a Sinhala widow in Colombo, negotiates with the changing political and social changes amidst growing hostility between Sinhalese and Tamils. Faced with increasing violence, Yashodhara's family leaves for America, where they learn to live as Americans until the Young Yashodhara, now fully grown and on the verge of divorce, returns to her homeland. In another narrative, Saraswathi, a young Tamil student is deprived of education as the war escalates in the North, and she loses them to the war. She is abducted and raped by the soldiers. Bereft of her social status after the violence unleashed upon her, Saraswathi is then sent away by her parents to join the insurgency despite her resistance, as the insurgents come looking for her. As she works for the rebels, killing armed soldiers and informants, she dreams of becoming a suicide bomber as a way of showing her real worth and contributing to the cause of the war. By giving narrative voice to Saraswathi, Munaweera has given a human dimension to the character of the suicide bomber.

The politics of otherness

Munaweera dwells on the construction of the other through the propagation of false narratives. She presents the Sinhalese construction of otherness through the narrative construction of native-outsider divide as they are faced with the prospect of an insurgency in the Tamil heartlands of the East and the North. Such demonization of the "other" is evident in the claims of the Seeni Banda, the one-legged fisherman, who claims in the manner of "teashop politics" (26), that "We Sinhala are Aryans and the Tamils are

Dravidians. This island is ours, given to us from the Buddha's own hand long, long before they came" (26). Mala refutes his claim by saying that according to her teacher, "Tamils have been here just as long as we have" and that "noone really knows who came first" (26). But Seeni Banda is adamant on his claim of Tamils being dreaded strangers who, he believes, have the support of the large Tamil population across the ocean in India. He expresses such fear through his rant:

> Tamil buggers, always crying that they are a minority, so small and helpless, but look! Just over our heads, hovering like a huge foot waiting to trample us, South India, full of Tamils. For the Sinhala, there is only this small island. If we let them, they will force us bit by bit into the sea. Swimming for our lives. (26)

Seeni Banda's comments represent the fear psychology against Tamils who are feared to displace the Sinhalas if they have the upper hand. The construction of fear psychology by showing the community inside their country as being loyal to similar communities of the neighboring country is a common tactic used in the making of the "native other." Just as in the case of Bengalis claiming Nepalis as loyal to Nepal, and the Nepali Pahade population claiming that the Madhesis are loyal to India, the Sinhalese also foster the claim that the Tamils are loyal to South India rather than to Sri Lanka. Seeni Banda's suspicion of the significant other, however, is not completely unfounded. The suspicion of the Sinhalese about India, especially the Tamils from Tamil Nadu of India, helping the Tamils gain their political foothold in Sri Lanka is founded in the historical geopolitical influence India has had in the domestic affairs of South Asian nations. In Sri Lanka, India initially provided training and financial support to the Tigers (Weisman 85; qtd in

Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations 275). When the Sri Lankan security forces were reportedly close to defeating the Tigers, India airlifted food for the Tigers, forcing the Sri Lankan government to agree to provide a considerable amount of autonomy to the Tamils, in the condition that the Tamils would surrender their weapons to the Indian Army. The Indian Army deployed 50,000 troops to enforce the agreement, but when the Tigers did not quit, engaged in a war. When a Tiger assassinated Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian government's support to the Tigers stopped, but that did not stop the Tamils of South India from helping them. The officials of the Tamil Nadu government went so far as allowing the Tigers "to operate in their state with a "virtually free run" of their 500-mile coast and to send supplies and weapons across the narrow Palk Strait to the insurgents in Sri Lanka" (Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* 275).

Later in the novel, as the conflict escalates in the north and the east, a UNP politician suggests that Tamils should go back to India where he believes they belong. He says,

> If there is discrimination in this land which is not their Tamil homeland, then why try to stay here? Why not go back to India where there would be no discrimination? There are your kovils and gods. There you have your culture, education, universities. There you are masters of your own fate. (76)

These remarks of the politician show how the majority Sinhalese are intent on projecting Tamils as Indians. By asking them to "go back" to India, he is presenting the Tamils as foreigners. The history of Tamil settlement in the country could be traced back to several centuries when the Island had a Tamil kingdom before the advent of colonialism which

subjugated the many kingdoms in the island and consolidated the nation-state of Sri Lanka. Not only are the Sinhalese in the novel oblivious to the historical evidence of the existence of a Tamil kingdom in Sri Lanka, but also they are oblivious to the alienation of the Tamils in the countryside in the wake of the promulgation of the 1958 Constitution: "God only knows what is happening in the North. Those Tamil buggers talking rot, oppression, separate country and what not. Should just send the whole lot back to India" (53). Seeni Banda thus resorts to the demonization of the other as a dangerous outsider through the construction of fictive stories, a tactic played by the majority against the minority. The narrator in the novel says the children "had not realized that the Tamil children they go to school with harbored such insidious and watery intentions" (26).

The suspicion of strangers as the enemy gets a stronghold in the wake of the imposition of state-sanctioned discrimination. Early on in the novel, in the backdrop of the violence engulfing the city, Radhini, a fourth standard Tamil girl, is about to be lynched by a Sinhalese mob. When her teacher, who is also a Sinhalese, confronts the mob why they are after the girl, they respond by saying that "She's Tamil. That's enough. They take our land, our sons. If we let them they will take the whole country" (29). But the teacher shows extraordinary courage and attachment to her student by claiming that her student is a Sinhalese, prompting the student to recite "the ithipiso gatha" (29). The student recites the Buddhist verses that preach "unattachment, impermanence, the inevitability of death," which saves her life. The Sinhala teacher's gesture symbolizes an instance of cross-cultural affective relationship that transcends the narrow boundaries of ethnic and communal identity, and the realization of a larger human relationship. The issue of such

cross-cultural affective relationships will be dealt with elaborately in the latter part of this chapter.

A house divided: alienation and belonging

In *The Island of Thousand Mirrors*, the structural division of the Wellawatte house—the Tamil territory represented by the Shivalingam family, and the Sinhalese territory represented by the Rajasinghe family, is symbolic of the perceived divide of the country as the Tamil territory and the Sinhala territory respectively. The territorialization of the household then stands as a microcosm of the territorialization of Sri Lanka into Tamil and Sinhala strongholds. The two families enact the discourse that has divided much of postcolonial Sri Lankan history as well as the colonial past. While the upper part of the house represents the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka inhabited by Tamils, the lower section resembles the Sinhala strongholds. The narrator says,

> Overnight, the upstairs becomes a foreign territory, ruled by different gods and divergent histories, populated by thick braided, Kanjivaram saried women... This is the beginning of what we will come to call the Upstairs-Downstairs, Linga-Singha wars. When Sylvia Sunethera calls Buddhist monks to the house, their monotone chant is interrupted by the voice of a Tamil film heroine winding seductively down the stairs. (38)

Further, Sylvia Sunethra's unsubstantiated suspicion of the Tamil other continues unbridled in petty things such as:

> When her flowers die, she is convinced that Shivalingam boys hold pissing contests off the balcony. When she finds splashes of red amongst the

> yellow, she is sure the ancient grandmother shoots betel as expertly as her grandsons shoot urine. Counting her rent money she mutters, “Bloody Tamil buggers. Hanging their washing from the balconies. Dirty water dripping on our heads. Enough to give a non-stop headache.” (38)

Even the matter of ripe mangoes falling in the Shivalingam territory turns into “the greatest wars,” as prompting Sylvia Sunethra to consider it as the usurping of opportunities by the Tamils from the Sinhalese. When Visakha, her daughter, argues that the mangoes are falling in the Shivalingam territory only because the tree grows right into their balcony, Sylvia Sunethra retorts:

> Doesn’t matter! Stealing is stealing! This is our land! Anything that grows on it belongs to us. They should keep their fingers off our things!... Bloody Tamils everywhere. What all have I done in another life to deserve this invasion business? (39)

Sylvia Sunethra’s hatred of the Shivalingam family emerges from the suspicion prevalent among the Sinhalese that the Tamils, because of their proximity to power and access to the resources of the state, had taken the ripe fruits of bureaucracy and education. Such hatred of the Tamils among the Sinhalese comes down from the British colonial period itself, when the colonial rulers, aware of the bureaucratic benefits of the divide-and-rule-policy, had done nothing to hide their favor of the Tamils. Sylvia Sunethra, the judge’s widow, shows her suspicion of the Tamils when she comments about a Tamil family with the surname “Shivalingam.” She says: “Named after Lord Shiva’s privates. These Tamils. So shameless. Who can tell what-all-kind-of-nonsense they could get up to. Anyone but them.” The suspicion of the Tamil other remains in a subterranean form in Sylvia

Sunethra even when she eventually rents her upper floor to the Shivalingams owing to her eroding financial condition.

While Sylvia Sunethra has a total suspicion of the Tamils, her daughter, representing the younger generation, shows the possibility of recognition of the Other. Visakha's growing attraction, despite the suspicion of the Other she has acquired from her mother, for the youngest Shivalingam boy, named Ravan, represents the admixture of foreignness and recognition that Tamils and Sinhalese communities experienced in thinking about each other.

> ...after all, how is it possible that she feels this recognition? As if she knows him! So that despite his foreignness in so many ways, the oil shining in his hair, the scents of unfamiliar foods on his clothes, he feels intimate in a way that shocks her. (40)

The attraction and cross-cultural affiliation continue in the next generation in the Wellawatte household when Ravan's son, Shiva, and Visakha's daughter Yashodhara share the same alternative space shared by their parents during their adolescence. The love nest, in which Ravan and Visakha found love, and also realize the insurmountable differences between them that they would have to face to be together, continues to inspire solidarity and love between their children as well. Even when the children, unaware of the insurmountable differences between their respective communities, share their common space and language, the competitive practice of indoctrinating individuals with the otherness of the Other by feeding stories of historical injustices, and presenting the Other as the enemy, continues among the elders. This shows how difference and otherness are

often socially constructed. Yasodhara's indoctrination about the Tamil Other comes from her grandmother, Sylvia Sunethra, whose hatred of Tamils is apparent in the way she punishes the Tamil child, Shiva, for teaching Tamil to her granddaughter. Reminiscing the moment of her grandmother's slapping of Shiva during a tour of a beach, Yasodhara says,

> We had been talking in our shared language, that particular blur of Sinhala, Tamil and English much like what our mothers used in the early days when suddenly my grandmother...pins [Shiva] like an insect. Her iced voice, incredulous, "Are you teaching my granddaughter Tamil?" Her hand smashing hard across his cheek.
>
> ...It was the first time we knew without question that we were different, separate, and that this difference was as wide as the ocean. (62)

Just as in the case of Visakha and Ravan, there is co-belonging among their children, Yasodhara, Lanka and Shiva, until they are inflicted with suspicion of one another by the elders. Their friendship is punctuated by the suspicion fed to them by their elders. Consider this exchange between the narrator and her grandmother, who does not want to see her granddaughter being friends with a Tamil child:

> Sylvia Sunethra: "Dont get too fond of that one."
>
> Yashodhara: "But Achi, why not? What has he done?"
>
> Sylvia Sunethra: "He hasn't done anything. But they are Tamil. Not like us. Different."
>
> Yashodhara: "How? Different?"
>
> Sylvia Sunethra: "Can't you see child? They're darker. They smell different. They just aren't like us." (73)

It is this imposition of otherness and cultural difference emphasized by elders that the Rajasinghe and Shivalingam children resist and revolt against when they create a shared space of belonging.

> For months, there are kisses by her ears, the corners of her mouth. They whisper in English, their only common language. Haltingly, stumblingly, learning the unfamiliar contours of each other's lives. He tells of the land his family has left far up in the North, a place of dry soil and palmyrah trees, lagoons that reflect the hard blue bowl of the sky.

It is the third language, English, which serves as a common, neutral language bridging the linguistic gap between them, and binds them together in a transgressive relationship that defies the conventional boundaries of their ethnicity. Moreover, it helps them communicate with each other about their respective cultural backgrounds.

The hideout in which they explore their sexuality represents a place that cannot be seen by their elders. But the place still cannot offer the possibility of a permanent coming together of the two teenagers belonging to different—possibly antagonistic—ethnic communities. The jasmine-smelling square room, painted in blue, their "love nest," is the third space, a neutral territory that allows the Tamil and the Sinhalese teenagers to explore and express their sexuality, and also to understand one another:

> Over the months, they become ruthless, disappearing often into their jasmine shrouded den. Held within the blue walls, they can hear the diverse workings of the house. The far-away sounding calls of their various families, his brothers and sisters, Sylvia Sunethra and Alice. *It is like being*

> *submerged underwater, lying on the ocean bed* listening to the voices of a different world. (43; emphasis mine)

The love-nest is that possible shared space of belonging—a neutral space which has blue color painted on its walls, signifying the color of peace and harmony. But that space, the square room of harmony, is all but non-existent in the memory of the elders. The younger generation, who are not untouched by the ethnic divides in the society, cannot sustain their togetherness for long. They have to come out of the cocoon and comfort of that neutral space when they are faced with the hard truth of the outside world. Their attempt at marriage and togetherness, and permanently creating a space of co-habitation and co-belonging, is, at best, is an abortive attempt. Just as they cannot consummate their love as they are not fully aware of the extent of their sexual powers, they cannot fully realize the possibility of co-belonging. Their world is the world the ocean bed, lying submerged under the pressure of the water, tucked away from the reality of the outside world. The outer world is a world of hostilities and impossibilities. So, when the Tamil boy, in his desperation, asks her for marriage, Vishaka immediately becomes aware of the differences between their family backgrounds: “As if Sylvia Sunethra, brokenhearted dawn-beach-walker could survive the idea of one of her daughters wedded to a Tamil” (44). The love nest is that neutral space which does not carry ethnic and religious signifiers. The only signifiers in the love nest are the color, blue, and the flower, jasmine. Painted in blue and filled with the aroma of the jasmine, the love nest stands for peace and love, an alternative home away from home, envisaged by the Tamil and the Sinhala children. The room in itself is also a secular space, without any identity markers, and is tucked away from the everyday reality of ethnic division. It is in this neutral space that

the Tamil and the Sinhala adolescents share their cultural peculiarities, memories, and stories. It is an alternative space, what Homi Bhabha would call the third space of enunciation without the dichotomy of ethnic differences, a space where adolescents of two communities come together to love and recognize each other's otherness. It is in knowing each other's cultural differences and the hidden contours of their bodies that they come together to envisage the love nest a shared space of belonging.

However, attempts at envisaging a neutral space take two generations to come to fruition, first, when the first set of the Sinhala-Tamil adolescents--Visakha and Ravan--end their relationship with the knowledge that Visakha's mother would not approve of such a relationship with the "other"; second, when Yashodhara and Shiva have to run away to their respective dwellings at the sound of the gunshot outside the Wellawatte house, as the Sinhala-Tamil riot escalates. Such amateur attempts at creating a community of co-belonging, thus, prove insufficient tentatively.

Munaweera juxtaposes the love-inspiring blue square room with the bullet-riddled square room in which Saraswathi is raped by Sinhalese soldiers stands in stark juxtaposition with the blue square room in which the Tamil boys of the Shivalingam family and the Sinhala girls of the Wellawatte family share their belonging and romantic feelings for each other. By showing this juxtaposition, Munaweera sheds light into the fragility of peace in a country riddled with communal antagonism. Saraswathi says:

> The soldiers have left me a blank page. They used me, spoilt me and then threw me away like a piece of refuse. They had not expected me to survive.

> They should have killed me, but they didn't and this is their mistake. Now the Tigers write upon my surfaces. I learn the ways in which Tamil blood has been spilt by the Sinhala for centuries, the myriad ways they have excluded, humiliated and destroyed us. I learn the ways in which they hate us. I had not thought that such ferious hatred could exist. But the memory of bullet-riddled cement walls, a perfect square of sky, reminds me that hatred is real and that between us and them, it is the only thing. (172).

While the love nest stands as a symbol of failed attempts at co-belonging, the bullet-riddled square room in the Tamil hinterlands speaks of the deep-ingrained hatred between the two communities that seem insurmountable as one unleashes violence on the "other."

As the novel progresses, it makes several allusions to historical events in the post-independence Sri Lanka through the end of the Tamil insurgency. The year 1983 remains as the year of the rupture, when the anti-Tamil riot in Colombo orchestrated by the Sinhalese resulted in the dispersal of the Tamil population from the city and searched for new homes. In the aftermath of the riot, as Tamils migrate to the northern and eastern parts of the country, many take refuge in the western countries. Of the exodus of the Tamils from Colombo, the narrator says,

> Arteries, streams, and then rivers of Tamils flow out of the city. Behind them they leave: looted, soot blackened houses, the unburied and unburnt bodies of loved ones, ancestral wealth, lost children, Belonging and Nationalism. It is a list that stays bitter on the tongue, giving birth to fantasies of Retribution, Partition, Secession. They flee to ancestral

> villages abandoned decades ago, and it is in these northern places that the events of that July make them the most militant and determined of separatists. (89).

As expected, the upstairs Tamil family leaves the city for London, packing up whatever they could in a short span of time. The biggest loss is of Yashodhara's who, for months, wanders the erstwhile dwelling of the Shivalingams in the upper floor:

> In those first months, I wander upstairs, listen to my footsteps ringing through the haunted rooms and am inconsolable with the loss of Shiva. His voice comes to me on the staircase. I spill hot, angry, secret tears. It is impossible to breathe in this, our shared atmosphere without him. I lie awake at night wondering where they have gone, that large and riotous family who shared our lives so intimately. (90).

Yashodhara's loss is compounded by the fact that her family leaves Colombo for America, as the paraphernalia of home and hospitality in the city turns out to be rather flimsy. As the insurgency escalates in the Tamil heartlands, with emphasis on a separate Tamil "eelam," way in which home is understood in Sri Lanka also undergoes transformation. So how does the native "other" express its disenfranchisement? In the case of the Tamils, it is through violent resistance, which they hope will help them attain recognition in Sri Lankan polity. The Tamil Movement, then, stands as an expression of their quest for home, dignity and political participation in the making of Sri Lanka. The sacrifice for a homeland, a Tamil eelam, is projected as a higher goal than one's individual, material existence.

Home, self, and the ethics of solidarity

The question of dignity remains at the heart of the Tamil Movement. Rape symbolizes the violation of dignity, leaving one with a quest to restore it hrough violence. This is what inspires Saraswathi become a Tiger. It is only by joining the Tigers and fighting the Sinhalese as an act of revenge that she can take back her dignity. Saraswathi's mother tells her:

> You must go. Show people that you are a good girl. If you don't go no one will believe that you were taken by force. They will say, she is not even angry. There is a checkpoint close to the house and she must have encouraged them in some way. We will lose all respect. You must go. It is the only way. (ch 8)

Saraswathi's expulsion from her own home leads to potential liberation from the trauma of physical and psychological violence unleashed on her. Saraswathi draws her confidence and strength not from her filial family that has disowned her as a fallen woman but from what she calls the "true family" that has welcomed her and turned her into a Tiger. It is the fact of their being alienated and dislocated from their families—and effectively the society—that the Tamils have come to found an affective community of strangers. "My true family is back at camp," she says, "these are strangers I knew in a different time" (185). The central figure of the family is the Leader, the patriarch of the Tamil community who has taken upon himself the task of liberating the protecting the Tamils. So much so that Saraswathi time and again refers to him as the father: "The Leader is our Father. He has done everything for us. He has devoted his life to us" (179). Like Saraswathi, the entire Tamil Movement is guided by the need to defend the dignity

of one's language and religion. Even in individual lives, it becomes a guiding force. While the mutilation of the female body, mutilation of language and religion through constitutional change, the trampling over of a community's dignity, also inspires the Tamils to fight for their dignity. Saraswathi learns of the value of personal and political dignity in the camp. She says,

> I learn about our Leader. About how he has devoted his life to our people. Without him, we would be slaves, but he has shown us how to stand up and fight. He has given us our dignity. Without him we would be again nothing... (174)

Saraswathi's transformation from a docile, aspiring school teacher to a fearless Tiger, a "predator," is important in understanding how the Tamil Movement sustained for a quarter of a century. Death is eulogized as a necessary step that leads to freedom while sacrificing towards the making of an Eelam. For Saraswathi, the need to protect her dignity interlinks with the need to protect the dignity of the Tamils. Saraswathi says:

> We are Tigers now, fully formed and as ferocious as our men, dog tags on our wrists, throats and waist because we are not afraid to die cut up or blown to pieces (175-176). I am fearless. I am Free. Now, I am the predator (176). Now I am the Nataraja, the dancing face of death. Now I am the one with yellow eyes gleaming in the moonlit forest. The one who cannot be seen until she chooses to reveal herself.
>
> In this way I will never again be prey, small, trembling and weak. (177)

When Saraswathi returns home during holidays from the camp, she is a changed woman who commands pride and fear in the eyes of the villagers. She of the villagers's attitude to her:

> There is a different look in their eyes now. Pride, but also fear. I am glad of this. No one will ever again speak of Appa's daughter spoilt by the soldiers. From now on, they will see me as I am, a Tiger with teeth and claws. (183)

This image of Saraswathi as a war-hardened, tough Tiger is in sharp contrast with her earlier image as a meek village girl vulnerable to rape and humiliation. To conquer over the enemy, she has first to conquer and own their language to disguise her latent motives, however much she hates the "thickness" and "ugliness" of it. She says, "I am taught Sinhala. I let its ugliness take over my tongue (186)...The Colombo shopkeepers speak Sinhala at me and I reply effortlessly and smile back at them. I own their tongue as if I have been brought up in this smoky, crowded city instead of in quiet northern places (188).

Along with the quest for lost dignity, Saraswathi is also guided by the quest for recognition. The pursuit of recognition is so intense on the part of Saraswathi that she is determined to achieve it at the cost of the personal sacrifice of her body. It is only after her death, in becoming a martyr that there is a possibility of her being recognized and respected, and she is willing to sacrifice her physical body for attaining that recognition. In her book *Women and the Nation's Narrative,* Neloufer de Mel has argued that even though the women who become militants with insurgent groups, such as those involved

with the LTTE insurgency or those involved in the Janatha Vimukthi Peramunna (JVP) insurrections of the 1970s and the 1980s, defy traditional patriarchal norms and thereby attain freedom, they are still under the authority of male leaders and that they "just tend to internalize the strictures imposed on them by these leaders and also have to be held responsible for the death and destruction of others" (De Mel; qtd in Jayasuriya 234). De Mel further asserts that these women, even when their bodies become erased through their actions, can't represent themselves as others "variously manipulate the representations of such women as victims, martyrs, heroes, or simply as inhuman automatons based on their particular agendas" (De Mel; qtd in Jayasuriya 234). De Mel's argument rings true to the case of Saraswathi as well, as she also submits to the patriarchal rhetoric created by the LTTE Movement by portraying the Leader as the custodian of the interests of the Tamils, and that the Tamils should be ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of larger good of their community just as their Leader has sacrificed his life for their sake. However, Munaweera's characterization relieves Saraswathi of such obscurity by delving in detail into her story of how she has no option than to join the insurgency, and the hope that martyrdom could replace her dignity she has lost at the hands of Sinhala soldiers. Yashodhara's remembrance of Saraswathi, although as an unnamed bomber who killed the former's sister, also provides her with such recognition.

Rather than sticking to her group identity, Sylvia Sunethra shows affective attachment out of her group, in a display of inter-community solidarity. When a Sinhalese man demands to see the Tamil family that lives in her house, Sylvia Sunethra "fixes him with a gaze that does something to him, reminds him that before this business with the Tamils, there were

other older differences, distinctions of blood and caste that would have made his ancestors drop their eyes before her" (82). Sylvia Sunethra tells the Sinhalese man, "Tamils! What nonesense. This is Sinhala household. Only and my family are here. No bloody Tamils." The narrator narrates that "The men, shamed by the righteous old Sinhala lady, turn away. They will pursue their dark deeds in other more convivially acquiescent households" (82). It is important to notice that while the Sinhalese men go searching for other "convivially acquiescent households" that would help them identify and lynch Tamils, Sylvia Sunethra has shown conviviality to her Tamil tenants. Sylvia Sunethra, although belonging to the enemy camp and having disdain of the Tamils, becomes the saviour, and also the mother figure, the provider of food "sent up surreptitiously by the back stairs while outside the long columns of smoke rose into the air" (191) before the Shivalingams pack up whatever they could in a suitcase and run to the airport and out of the country. Sylvia Sunethra's act of kindness across ethnic lines with the Shivalingam family is a symbolic gesture of the ethics of solidarity that Munaweera has expounded in this novel as a recurrent theme. Another such gesture is shown by Anuradha when he extends his protection to a Tamil boy from being lynched by a Sinhalese mob in the wake of the 1983 riots. But in the case of Anuradha, solidarity comes with a price, as he has to sacrifice his own life because of his actions. Later, Anuradha's wife, Mala, continues to extend such solidarity after Anuradha's death to provide hospitality to Poornam, the Tamil girl. Showing Poornam's photos to Yashodhara later, when she returns from America, Mala says,

> She is my daughter, you know?...I adopted her. Put her through school. She teaches at the university now... a Professor of Mathematics...People said I

> was mad to take in a Tamil child. They said she would murder me in my bed. But now they come with proposals for my girl. (194)

On the other hand, the novel shows the failure of the Tamils to show such generous acts of conviviality. Saraswathi's transformation into a militant and suicide bomber is inspired by her desire to avenge the violence unleashed upon her. In aiming for revenge, Saraswathi takes recourse to violence, killing innocent Sinhalese children and, later, through the suicide bombing, a neutral person such as Lanka, who is involved in educating the child victims of the insurgency no matter which community the children belong to. The death of Lanka towards the end of the novel signifies the metaphorical death of Sri Lanka as a nation, which also forces Shiva and Yashodhara to flee the country once again. This time, however, it is not in different directions with their respective families but towards their shared future. Yasodhara says,

> Shiva and I, we fled that shattered country like tongue-tied, gaunt and broken ghosts. After the fires, after she was burned, all we wanted was each other. There was a refuge in each other that could be found nowhere else. We had shared a childhood, a house, the murder of our most beloved. Together we formed a country, a kingdom. We ran as far west as America would allow...When the fog lifts, San Fransisco sparkles. In this most European of American cities, exile, forgetting, escape seemed possible, even common. (214-215)

It is important to see how they find solace in each other's company but cut tie with the Island which bears the memory of their troubled past. It is only in forgetting their past

that Shiva and she can become themselves without the burden of their past and ethnic differences. Yasodhara further says,

> We have learned not to care about the state of that other place even as it burns or drowns. We cut ties, never calling across the oceans, and thus we are never woken up at three am by foreign sounding accents on the found. We do not seek out brown faces; we do not start at the sound of Sinhala or Tamil no matter how rarely we hear them spoken. Instead, we burrowed down, picked our comrades in exile and built a fortress about ourselves... The island dropped away from me the moment I left it framed in the airplane porthole. This is the only way we may survive. (215)

Even in their self-imposed exile and estrangement with the Island, they cannot but remain connected in one way or another to the Island. Moreover, the marriage of Yashodhara and Shiva also, at long last, partially fulfills the unrequited love between their parents—Shiva's father Ravan and Yashodhara's mother Visakha who had not been able to transgress the boundaries of their respective ethnic communities.

At the expense of Lanka, there is also the hope of a better future in the marriage of Shiva and Yashodhara (in the wake of the tragic death of Lanka) as a compromise for lack of a better option, and also as a reconciliation of Tamil and Sinhalese identities. By orchestrating the marriage of Shiva and Yashodhara, Munaweera envisages the possibility of establishing relationships beyond the confines of linguistic, religious, ethnic and state-sanctioned differences towards conceptualizing a community of co-belonging, what Leela Gandhi would call "anti-communitarian communitarianism." In his discussion of a

postsecular society, Manav Ratti has used this very phrase of Leela Gandhi. Ratti writes,"Political citizenship is one matter; but in the wake of the failure of the state, its secular ideals seem best realized through the lived, private domain of its peoples, through friendship and in Leela Gandhi's words anti-communitarian communitarianism" (65).

Moreover, the birth of Shiva's and Yashodhara's daughter, Samudhra, is the amalgamation of the two identities that come together from affective affiliation to filiation. Yashodhara says, "I am reminded, a triangle is the safest of shapes. A pyramid the soundest of structures. We are three again" (220). Here, the loss of Lanka is replenished by the birth of Samudhra, helping form the pyramid, whose bases are the Sinhala mother and the Tamil father, and the top being the hybrid daughter that stands as the representative of cross-community affiliation. Samudhra represents the cosmopolitan citizen, being "both American and Sri Lankan, but beyond this, also Tamil and Sinhala" (221). In the amalgamation of cosmopolitan, national and ethnic identity, Samudhra represents the possibility of radical citizenship that thrives on multiple belongingness and cross-cultural affiliation. The naming of their daughter, Samudhra, itself is a secular practice that does not have religious or ethnic connotation but a universal significance. Nevertheless, the name has connotations for the island nation. The fact that Samudra keeps asking about the history of Sri Lanka and wants to return there speaks of the possible secular future of Sri Lanka. So much so that when Samudhra is asked where her parents come "originally" from, she responds by saying that "They're from Siri Lanka (sic)" (217). When her friends ask her if the Tigers aren't freedom fighters "fighting for a separate homeland because they are discriminated against" (221), she responds, "There are no martyrs here.

It is a war between equally corrupt forces" (222). Later, when her father expresses his happiness on the defeat of the Tigers and subsequent possibility of peace, she says that what her father is saying

> is an impossibility. The Tigers killed my sister. I have seen the results of their fury. I have seen what the soldiers do. I know the absolute ferocity of these enemies. They have been fighting this war for most of my life. I cannot imagine a world without it. (233)

Yashodhara's conviction towards the end of the novel to remember not one side but both sides of the war even as people celebrate the end of the war reflects the upholding of humanity above political, ethnic and communal divisions. In Munaweera's representation of the Sri Lankan conflict, the quest for home is a difficult dream to achieve, one that takes huge sacrifice without necessary bringing in the expected results.

CONCLUSION

The politics of nationalism and nation building in postcolonial South Asia resulted in the systematic perpetuation of racial, linguistic and ethnic prejudices that were meted out to colonial subjects during colonialism. The need to consolidate newly established or restructured nation-states in made it imperative for the ruling class as well as the ethnic communities to harp on competing claims to nationalism which, in multi-ethnic societies such as South Asia, would prove insufficient. Such competing claims to resources and opportunities resulted in the creation of false binaries and allegories of the “native” and the “other,” the “local” and the “stranger” and the “citizen” and the “non-citizen.” The communities and groups that were left out of such narrow definitions of nationalism, many of them with the political agency, demographic strength, and claims to territories, asserted their claims to the nation and the state’s resources, sometimes through political mobilization and at other times through violent insurgencies.

This research project began with a premise that the emergence of the postcolonial theory in western academia in the 1980s onwards and its associated disciplines that deal with the postcolonial condition, such as migration, diaspora or transnationalism, have not addressed the issue of subcontinental homelessness after decolonization leading up to the end of the millennium. Why is it that post-millennium writers have a renewed interest in the issues of identity, homelessness and the nation within the subcontinent? What had been left untouched by the earlier generation of writers that needed to be fulfilled, and are

these new generations producing something that is fundamentally different from the previous generation of post-independence writers? Or, rather, what is different in the issue, representation and politics in the writing of the “Midnight’s grandchildren” from that of the “Midnight’s children"?

The research project studied contemporary Anglophone fiction by five South Asian writers who have depicted the experiences and expressions of communities and individuals left out of the mechanisms of nation-building and nationalism, hence alienated and dislocated in places they called home. It employed three main thematic parameters through which the claims to alienation and dislocation of the “native other” could be studied: home, alienation, and dislocation--and by extension, “nation” and “location” that exist within the words “alienation” and “dislocation.” It argued that post-millennial literary writings have dealt with the long shadow of postcolonial politics, and the problems and pitfalls of nation-building in South Asia, even as they deal with the contemporary concerns of alie*nation* and dis*location* in the global transnational scale.

By analyzing fictional texts that depict alienation and dislocation of “native other” at home, the research offered a lens through which to critically examine the problems and pitfalls of nation-building and nationalism in South Asia that have resulted in the creation of unequal and estranged citizens. The research project also called for a reconceptualization of the field of postcolonial theory, migration and diaspora studies to incorporate issues of intra-regional and trans-national flows of people within South Asia, inter-generational responses to the questions of nationalism, identity, and belonging.

The introductory first chapter laid out contemporary debates on postcolonial theory, nationalism and the idea of “otherness” that has remained as part of nation-building projects in postcolonial South Asian nation-states. By delving into the politics of postcolonial nationalism and the different concepts of home as a simultaneously personal and political category in South Asia, it further explored what the idea of a “native other” entails in a region which already has many categories of dislocated and dispossessed people like refugees, stateless, migrants, and diasporas. This research project did not deal extensively with aspects of refugeehood, forced migration or partition, as it is concerned, rather, with the “afterlives” of dislocation, or the experiences of the second and third generation of dislocated persons who have found a home in the settled place. It focused on narratives of displacement, homelessness and a chequered sense of belonging to the “home country” of the “native other.” It also discussed how contemporary Anglophone literature, sustained in part by publishing houses in South Asian metropolitan cities, is bringing South Asia together in a collective imagining of South Asian sensibility and literary aesthetics.

The second chapter delved into the question of whether the problem of alienation and dislocation native “others” is intricately linked to the lack of a territorial definition of identity on the basis of the claim of shared cultural and ethnic background and the idea of a political community. Through an analysis of the Indian Nepali community’s quest for an ethnic homeland in the eastern Himalayan region, the chapter questioned if the idea of belonging and “being at home” could emanate only through a territorially defined

homeland. It examined how Kiran Desai's novel *The Interitance of Loss* has depicted the politics and pitfalls of ethnoterritorial identity that simultaneously gives a sense of belonging to a section of people and disbelonging to others who do not conform to a such a narrow definition of identity. It argued that while the Indian Nepalis' struggle for identity is fought in the interstices of diasporic origin and claims to nativity, its negative repercussions are seen in the status of other communities share the same geographical space within the nation-state.

The third chapter dealt with the question of identity in a diasporic homeland, a seemingly paradoxical concept that defines the complex history of migration and dislocation in South Asia. It dwelt upon the Muhajir quest for making home in a new homeland, by leaving their history of a homeland behind, by examined how Kamila Shamsie's novel *Kartography* has depicted the politics of identity has rendered Karachi, a postcolonial migrant city, that borders on the experience of hospitality and hostility to its citizens, and is inclusive of all forms of people and communities even when it has the elements of exclusivity. It argued that Shamsie's depiction of characters belonging to both the "outsider" and the "native other" category attempting to redefine the nature of the city through collaborative ownership opens up the possibility of an ethics of alterity that celebrates diversity and acknowledges differences.

The fourth chapter dwelt upon the fallibility of a homeland based on a unitary notion of identity and nation, as it was manifest in the call for the creation of Bangladesh as a separate nation. It examined how Tahmima Anam's novel *A Golden Age* lays bare

problems of a national identity that undermines the diversity of the communities within the national territory, and the aspirations of those communities to for representation in the national narrative. The fifth chapter examined Manjushree Thapa's novel *Seasons of Flight* in the context of the politics of nationalism, and the political changes brought about by the Maoist insurgency and identity politics in the 1990s and beyond. It interpreted Prema's estrangement from her home and homeland as a result of the exclusive nationalism that has rendered many citizens native "others." The sixth chapter examined Nayomi Munaweera's novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, focusing on how personal homes become microcosms of the nation when the division at the national level seeps into the household and changes relationships between individuals and communities. It also examined how Munaweera has foregrounded the ethics of alterity through her depiction of the enormous risks people take by opening their homes and extending solidarity to the "native other."

There might have been another way of organizing this thesis, around the central issue of gender and nation. All the primary texts are written by women, and they all have strong female characters who challenge dominant narratives of the nation and bring a gendered perspective to the questions of home, belonging, identity and nation. While some of the chapters dealt with this issue, the main objective of this research project was to understand how contemporary literary fiction from South Asia have engaged with the struggles of the nations to come out from the long shadow of colonialism and build themselves up.

The stories of alienation and dislocation, the attempts of the "native others" to claim, find or build homes, and by extension this research project itself cannot possibly have a definite closure. Metaphorically speaking, these are open wounds that remain a testimony of the deep divides brought about by nation-making projects and processes in South Asia. The perpetuation of otherness is a lived reality even in the present South Asian context. So, even as they are historiographic narratives, they are stories of the present as well and explain the turmoil South Asian societies face in contemporary times. Even as during the writing of this conclusion, Darjeeling district is reeling under unrest for a month after a West Bengal government sent directives to make Bengali compulsory across the state triggered protests from the Indian Nepali community. The WB government has since retracted the directive, but the demand has for Gorkhaland has continued more than a month. The idea of the "other" has resurfaced, as the Bengali-dominated state government views the Indian Nepalis suspiciously as having foreign connections. The situation in Gorkhaland In Nepal, the Madhesi community, led by Madhes-based political parties, has been raising the issue of inclusion and proportional representation to compensate for the historical domination of the Pahadi community members in bureaucracy and political affairs. The Madhesi agitation is only one of the many different movements for identity, including that of Janajati groups and women, after 1990, and especially after the 2006 Movement. In Karachi, the Mujajir quest for equitable distribution of resources largely remains unfulfilled, with occasional instances of ethnic violence appearing in parts of the city although the situation is nowhere near that of the 1980s and the 1990s. In Sri Lanka, the Tamil separatist movement ended in 2009, leaving behind a trail of thousands of civilian deaths in the final years of the war. The Mahinda Rajapaksa government, which

had defeated the Tamil insurgents, made some attempts at addressing the concerns of the Tamils, including the introduction of Tamil as an official language. The current prime minister, M. Sirisena, has made some significant attempts at bridging addressing the issues that remain unsolved. Bangladesh, on the other hand, is reeling under Islamic fundamentalism on the one hand, and also providing a sense of justice to the victims of the 1971 war, as it has made major progress with the prosecution of perpetrators of grave human rights violations and Pakistani collaborators.

In this sense, the novels are chronicles of the present as well as of South Asia's recent past. Moreover, as South Asian nations continue to undermine the importance of official historiography and memorialization of historical events, these novels serve as documents that chronicle and bring to the fore South Asian stories of struggles for belonging and location. Each country in South Asia has a different historical trajectory, and an attempt to prescribe a generic understanding of the idea of South Asia would undermine the very idea of South Asia. This thesis tried to capture the complexity of South Asia through question of alienation and dislocation vis-a-vis the identity and experience of the "native other." As nations are a work in progress, the projects of nationalism and nation building remain an unfinished business in South Asia, as in much of the world. The alienation and dislocation of the "native other," the claims for home and homeland, and the cycle of belonging and otherness, therefore, remain a continuous process. Hence the closure of this thesis without a definite "closure."

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