

IDENTITY SHIFT IN SOUTH ASIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN
SELECTED NOVELS

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Almighty “Allah”

(Who has given me strength, knowledge, patience, and wisdom)

My “Parents”

(Who taught me words)

My “Wife and Children”

My wife Rana, my dearest son Ali and my loveliest daughters Sara & Mayar, whose, love and sincerity highly motivated me to finish this valuable work, I really appreciate their motivation, encouragement, patience and everlasting love



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ABSTRACT

In literature, identity and identity shift are very essential issues in the postcolonial world. Identity is an indication of similarities and differences between some people from others. From a psychological perspective, identity shift is the people's identification through the context and culture they encounter. It is one of the most contested subjects in the post-colonial era. However, in the past, the focus on postcolonial studies was only on fictional texts. Very few literary studies have looked beyond the text into real-life identity-related perspectives. Thus, the present study has just done that and focused on identity shift in fictional texts and its reflection in the real world. This qualitative research has investigated identity change, the effect of Self/ Other, and identity shift of the main characters of selected novels. The purpose of such a combination is to attempt the similarities and differences between the two novels. This study assumes that an immigrant who migrates to a western country suffers from many social issues namely: racism, economics, and inequality. Data was collected from Kiran Desai's, *The Inheritance of Loss* along with Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. The data were thematically analysed following Braun & Clark's six essential steps: reading, highlighting, coding, reviewing themes, identifying themes, and writing up. The findings of this study, therefore, revealed that the main characters maintained their native cultural identity and yet they gained aspects of the other identity. Hence, the effect of displacement has been immense because it changed the individuality of the migratory people in several ways. Moreover, as the main characters leave their homeland, they are both exposed to become unfamiliar with the host land's culture. They confronted new ways of life that radically differed from their native cultural traditions. Consequently, they accepted the host land's culture. So, they are caught in new social circumstances that require a new lifestyle. This gives the impression that the immigrants in the western countries have been lost between the two identities in their struggle to adapt themselves to a new environment and social milieu. The originality of this research is the comparative features of the fictional Indian migration, projected in Desai's, *The Inheritance of Loss* and Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* experience in the UK and the USA. Thus, this study can be fruitful to help the immigrants to gain a wider perspective on their status as immigrants in the host countries as well as come to terms with mutual understanding with other immigrants in the same country. Furthermore, it can be a benefit for future immigrants who wish to immigrate to the western world. Subsequently, this research functions as a guide to the Indian and Arabs who plan to migrate to foreign countries and could pave the way for further discussion in the realm of immigrants' adaptability in the host countries.

ABSTRAK

Dalam kajian lepas, identiti dan anjakan identiti adalah isu yang sangat penting dalam dunia pascakolonial. Identiti adalah petunjuk persamaan dan perbezaan sesetengah orang dengan orang lain. Dari perspektif psikologi, anjakan identiti ialah pengenalan manusia melalui konteks dan budaya yang mereka hadapi. Ia adalah salah satu subjek yang paling banyak diperbincangkan dalam era pascakolonial. Walau bagaimanapun, pada masa lalu, tumpuan kepada kajian pascakolonial hanya tertumpu kepada teks fiksyen. Sangat sedikit kajian sastera telah melihat di luar teks ke dalam perspektif berkaitan identiti kehidupan sebenar. Oleh itu, kajian ini baru sahaja mengkaji dan memfokuskan kepada anjakan identiti dalam teks fiksyen dan refleksinya di dunia nyata. Kajian kualitatif ini telah menyiasat perubahan identiti, kesan Diri/Orang Lain, dan anjakan identiti watak utama novel terpilih. Tujuan gabungan tersebut adalah untuk mencuba persamaan dan perbezaan antara kedua-dua novel tersebut. Andaian kajian ini merupakan pendatang yang berhijrah ke negara barat yang mengalami pelbagai isu sosial, termasuk perkauman, ekonomi, dan ketidaksamaan. Data di kumpul daripada *The Inheritance of Loss* hasil karya Kiran Desai bersama *Season of Migration to the North* hasil nukilan Tayeb Salih. Data dianalisis secara tematik mengikut enam langkah penting Braun & Clark: membaca, menandakan, mengekod, menyemak tema, mengenal pasti tema dan menulis. Penemuan kajian ini, oleh itu, mendedahkan bahawa watak-watak utama mengekalkan identiti budaya asal mereka dan masih memperoleh aspek identiti lain. Oleh itu, kesan anjakan sangat besar kerana ia mengubah keperibadian orang yang berhijrah dalam beberapa cara. Lebih-lebih lagi, apabila watak utama meninggalkan tanah air mereka, mereka terdedah untuk menjadi kekok dengan budaya tanah tuan rumah. Mereka berhadapan dengan cara hidup baharu yang berbeza secara radikal daripada tradisi budaya asal mereka. Akibatnya, mereka menerima budaya tanah tuan rumah. Jadi, mereka terperangkap dalam keadaan sosial baharu yang memerlukan gaya hidup baharu. Ini memberi gambaran bahawa pendatang di negara barat lemas antara dua identiti dalam perjuangan mereka untuk menyesuaikan diri dalam persekitaran dan persekitaran sosial yang baru. Keaslian penyelidikan ini ialah ciri perbandingan anjakan fiksyen India yang diunjurkan dalam *The Inheritance of Loss* karya nukilan Desai dan *Season of Migration to the North* karya nukilan Salih dari sudut pengalaman anjakan di UK dan Amerika Syarikat. Oleh itu, kajian ini boleh membuahkan hasil untuk membantu pendatang untuk mendapatkan perspektif yang lebih luas mengenai status mereka sebagai pendatang di negara tuan rumah serta memahami persefahaman bersama dengan pendatang lain di negara yang sama. Tambahan pula, ia boleh memberi manfaat kepada bakal pendatang yang ingin berhijrah ke dunia barat. Seterusnya, kajian ini berfungsi sebagai panduan kepada pendatang dari India dan Arab yang merancang untuk berhijrah ke negara luar dan boleh membuka jalan kepada perbincangan lanjut dalam bidang penyesuaian pendatang di negara tuan rumah.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ICS</i>	-	Indian Civil Service
<i>GRLF</i>	-	Gorkha National Liberation Front
<i>CH</i>	-	Cultural Hybridity
<i>N.Y</i>	-	New York



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THE STUDY

This thesis on identity shift is comprised of five Chapters (see Figure 1.1). Chapter one is the introduction to the study that covers the background of the study, which focuses on a brief history of the postcolonial period as well as the effect of migration on identity. Then, it leads the readers to Kiran Desai as one of the Indian novelists, followed by Synopses of Salih's novel *Season of Migration to the North*. In addition, it discusses the statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, aim of the study, the significance of the study, and limitation and subsequently ends with the definition of terms and key concepts.

Chapter two reviews the major themes regarding postcolonial thought and concepts. Then, tackles theories and various definitions of identity, including different perspectives of various scholars of thoughts about identity, followed by previous studies on postcolonial frameworks and research conducted in the area of postcolonial issues in various contexts. Finally, the conceptual framework of the current study is given, which serves as a foundation for the present study to answer the research questions developed.

Chapter three begins with a light note on cross-sectional research, followed by a detailed report of the methodological considerations, research design, data collection, setting and participants, procedures, instruments, interpretations, and data analysis. Besides, the validity and reliability concerns are addressed too.

Chapter four of the thesis presents the results of the qualitative analysis based on research questions and objectives. A research paper, "*Identity crises in multicultural society: A study of postcolonial selected novel*" has been published based on the initial findings in an indexed journal: *The Epitome: International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(9), pp. 1-8. Besides that, two other research papers address the first and the second objectives, "*Cultural identity among Iraqi immigrants: Four voices and different opinions*": and "*The study of the impact of diaspora on identity with the reference to the novel The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai*": have been published in Scopus journals: *The International Journal of Innovation, Creativity*

and Change, 10(10), pp.681-689 and the Journal of Talented Development and Excellence, 12(1). P1738-1745. Another paper which dealt with identity shift and hybridity, “*A postcolonial identity shift in The inheritance of loss by Kiran Desai*” has been published in a Scopus journal too; PalAcrcch’s Journal of Archaeology of Egypt /Egyptology, 17(7). pp.7850-7860.

Finally, Chapter five concludes the thesis with a summary of the results, the implication of the study, contribution to knowledge and understanding, limitations and recommendations for future study. In conclusion, the final remarks of the current study were stated.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Identity is considered one of the most contested subjects in the postcolonial era. It can be considered the most crucial subject because of the crisis that emerged in most post-colonial societies. Due to the events during the post-colonial era and the adversities experienced by recently freed countries and nations in their search and construction of self-identity, the phenomenon has become an outstanding issue (Dizayi, 2015). The issues surrounding identity are dynamic and can change when everything that is considered safe can be questioned. As Mercer states, "identity only becomes an issue when it was in crisis when something assumed to be fixed, solid and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty"(Mercer, 1995, p.43).

The end of World War II escalated the demand for change by the countries under colonial rule when they fought to regain their individual and social identities. The era was also known for the conflict of decolonization in all aspects of life, where identity was affected by the colonizers. According to Edward Said:

"It is a historical truth that nationalism-restoration of the people, declaration of identity, coming out of new cultural practices as a mobilized political power initiated and then raised the struggle against western authority in the non-European world" (Said, 1993, p. 218).

In addition, in the postcolonial term, identity is a complicated notion and cannot be easily described. The identity of a person, group, or nation can be easily linked to the 'Other', which means that they regard themselves as 'us with the being of the other'. In the post-colonial era, otherness is a significant feature for

identification; it also means 'both identity and difference, so that every 'other' is excluded, where it is dialectically created to include the values and meaning of the colonizing culture even as it rejects its power to define" (Sinha, 2008, p. 4). Besides, this binary is linked to otherness and forms an issue of an identity shift. It creates a hierarchal framework within the period. The constructed national identity in any post-colonial state "is believed to be never fixed and is changing according to environment and culture because of the transfer and sovereignty which leads to confusion in identity" (Chan, 2013, p.1). Hall argues, "Identity appeared as a kind of unsettled space or an unresolved question in that space between several intersecting discourses" (Hall, 1991, p.10).

Additionally, identity is a psychological term established by the relationship between 'self' and 'other'. Identity is our sense of being in a way that people identify themselves as members of some ethnic group, nation, or public class, giving a sense of belonging. Nations are communities that give us a sense of belonging through individual feelings about his or her companion. In other terms, people believe that they are part of one combined body called a community or nation. As Anderson admits in his book "*Imagined Political Communities*", the nation's survival depends on the contrivance and performance of customs, past times, and symbols that help people to form their identity (Anderson, 2006). Therefore, national history is very significant in depicting the past as a combined experience related to one's community. It constructs a private version of the historical identity. Anderson's phrase "*Imaginary Communities and Nationalism*" is based upon the unified concept of an imaginary community (Ibid). Moreover, nations also supply people with a sense of belonging, connection, and identity by sharing territories they think are theirs. Hence, they are separated from other people's land by borders. Researchers usually agree that the nation of a nation is western in origin, which came into existence with the expansion of capitalism in the west (Enescu, 2013).

In this sense, the issue of identity has been encountered in various shapes and forms, where even "collective and individual identities differ physically and psychologically" (Eader, 2002). The endurance of decolonization took several outlines owing to societies, countries, and citizens; however, identity cannot be merely imposed; it must be chosen and effectively used within a given social context. "Against dominant representations of others, there is resistance, and within structures of dominance, there is agency" (Arthur, 2010).

1.2 Background of study

Postcolonial literary writings have portrayed significant aspects of the lives of colonised communities by providing cultural, social, and political examples. Many writers from developing countries have confirmed the creation of such texts in depicting the sufferings of these communities (Shands, 2008). The fictional characters in these texts symbolize some real characters affected directly and profoundly by colonialist activities. They also adopted ideologies and hybrid cultures strange to their moral and social backgrounds (Little, McGivern & Kerins, 2016). The attitudes towards the ‘alien culture’ are either demonstrated by the complete identification of the new culture or entirely rejected.

Because of its effects on postcolonial communities, identity shift is regarded as one of the most critical subjects in the modern world (Dizayi, 2015). This issue was investigated in numerous studies due to the conditions of the postcolonial period. The way the newly freed countries lived, and their struggle for their own identity. As a result, the subject of identity became a central issue in colonised communities. In this regard, Edward Said (1999b) stated that:

Identity-who we are, where we come from, what we are-is difficult to maintain in exile...we are the ‘other’, an opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement, an exodus. Silence and discretion veil the hurt, slow the body searches, soothe the sting of loss (pp.16–17).

This shift in the lives of colonised communities made postcolonial novels different from the traditional ones in terms of individuals, people, and societies. From a psychological view, since colonialism does not end with the end of the colonial occupation, many novels focus on the effects of the coloniser on the colonised societies. Hence, the effect of colonisation on colonised people can be described by such terms as ‘double consciousness’ and ‘hybridity’ (Baker, 2006).

In both novels, namely ‘*The Inheritance of Loss*’ by Kiran Desai and ‘*Season of Migrations to the North*’ by Tayeb Salih, the writers explored the issue of identity in colonized characters. These novels imply that the physical mobility of an individual from one nation to another could cause cultural and identity problems and lead to westernized and hybrid individuals because they will face new social and cultural

challenges. The results may be the ‘alienation’ of the individual from the local people and culture.

In her novel *‘The Inheritance of Loss’*, Desai clearly portrays the issue of identity through the main characters. Jemubhai, the protagonist, was raised in the Gujarati village of Pilphi. Before Jemu departs to England to study ICS, his prudent father arranges his marriage with Bela (later Nimi), the daughter of a wealthy man, Bomanbhai Patel. To help his son stay in England, he extorts a large sum of money as a dowry. Jemu returns with an ICS and joins the British government as a judge in Uttar Pradesh's Bonda district. From the beginning, the process of cultural dislocation gets to work. When he sets out to England, He tosses away the packed food his mother gives him. He discards his mother’s love terming it as “undignified love, Indian love, stinking anaesthetic love...” Jemu is westernized now, he fails to accept the traditions of his country. Because he has a superiority complex, other people appear to him unacceptable. Instead of ‘roti’ he forms the habit of eating ‘ham roll’, ‘Tuna fish soufflé’ and ‘khari biscuit pie’ (p.17) ³ He is resentful of his rural wife and now considers her “Just a county bumpkin” and “incredibly stupid”. He says “she is unsuitable to be my wife” (p.306). Consequently, he suffers from an enigmatic identity and seeks to find his own identity (Haseeb, 2012).

Seemingly, Tayeb Salih’s definitions of ‘nation’ and ‘identity’ seem more severe than Kiran Desai’s. In this regard, Salih's novel shows the Oriental/Occident gap with various complex narrative structures and massive reliance on flashbacks. It deals with the influence of European colonization on the colonized natives and lands. It also reflects upon the cultural identity of the colonized countries and is absorbed into the universal colonial centre (Hassan et al.,2021). Salih, as an Afro-Arab writer, characterizes the identity shift through the actions of Mustafaa Saeed, who is a Sudanese boy divided in living between traditional Sudanese beliefs and British colonial pressures. Through the main character, Mustafaa, we understand some cultural complexities faced by the individuals in their journey to justify their existence in the new environment.

The researcher selected these two novels for three main reasons. First, both novels are considered postcolonial texts showing some aspects of living in the colonised communities and the difficulties encountered by the people. Second, both novels share some similar themes, including the cultural identity of immigrants, those living in exile, and displacement. Third, both novels explore the theme of identity shift

in immigrants from two different perspectives, namely from the viewpoint of the coloniser and the colonised. Kiran Desai is an Indian-American writer conveying the coloniser's viewpoint, and Tayeb Salih is an Afro-Arab writer presenting the coloniser's viewpoint concerning the issue of identity in postcolonial times.

1.2.1 Synopsis of Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

As a talented Indian author and American citizen, Kiran Desai centralizes Indians as heroes in her writings. Her novels portray the difficulties encountered by Indian immigrants settling in the UK and the US. When Desai was fourteen years old, she migrated to England and then travelled to the US to continue her studies. Her novel entitled '*The Inheritance of Loss*' was her second literary work published in 2006, for which she won a Man Booker Prize and National Book Critics Fiction Award. Writing this novel took eight years, and she used her experience of living and residing outside India. However, the novel seems to provide a fictionalised version of her journey from East to West; it is not considered an autobiography. She used the literary route in this novel to revisit her past and ancestral history in Gujarat and Kalimpong. The novel explores two continents and several cultures in postcolonial India and the US. It deals with the identity shift the Indians face despite postcolonial reactions in which an attempt is made to revive indigenous culture and values. The novel was set partly in India and partly in the US. Moreover, the novel portrays the individual identity and struggle for self-determination of an ethnic group resulting from despair and a sense of deprivation, leading to displacement, exile, and loss. The author focuses on basic human emotions, such as cultural identity, a conflict between self and other, love, sex, conflict, struggle, marriage, adjustments, and cultural hybridity.

The story occurred in a region between Kalimpong, the north-eastern Himalayas, close to the Indian border with Nepal, Bhutan, and China in 1943. The novel is set in an isolated house called Cho Oyu at the fort of Mount Kanchanjunga. There are five significant characters Sai, Biju, Jemubhai, the cook, and Gyan. Those five main characters were chosen as central characters as the novel revolves around them more than the other characters. Sai Mistry is a sixteen-year-old girl from an upper-class society educated in an Indian convent in the mid-1980s. She attended some western schools and returned to India with a westernized culture. Sai is an orphan

living with her grandfather, Jemubhai, a retired judge. He is a Patidar by caste, an Indian Civil Service (ICS) officer, and a retired judge. The cook is a chef of the judge and Biju's father. When he was (14) years old, he started to work for the judge. He usually does what the judge asks him. Even though he knows his place, he works hard to ensure his son (Biju) makes a better life in New York. He is proud of his son for moving from one job to another.

Gyan is a science graduate student and belongs to the Nepali Gurkha family. Hence, Sai's grandfather appoints him as a tutor, and he comes into Sai's life as a mathematic tutor. Although both Sai and Gyan belong to the Indian family, they are not from the same caste and culture. Therefore, Jemubhai prioritises his identity as an ethnic Nepali and despises Sai and her way of living. The grandfather was first married to Bela and then to Nimi in 1986. After retirement, he chooses to live in a large bungalow named Cho Oyu, built during their passion for virgin landscapes. However, due to their different education, language, and wealth, Sai and her grandfather are strangers in their homeland. While her grandfather prefers the Indian culture to the westernized one, Sai loves English culture and traditions. She speaks English, eats fast food, and celebrates western festivals, but she forgets the Indian cultural values while studying in a western school. On the other hand, Gyan is a pure Indian gentleman and does not like western culture. The first clash in their love affair takes place when Sai invites Gyan to a Christmas party, but he feels irritated and shouts:

"I am not interested in Christmas!" (P. 160) "Why do you celebrate Christmas? You're Hindus and you don't celebrate Id or GuruNanak's birthday or even Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New Year" (P. 163).

Gradually, he hates her because of her love for western culture. Gyan believes that the upper western class Indian society is responsible for the problems and mistreatment of the poor Nepalese. Then, both start to hate each other due to their cultural differences. Sai does not change her mind, and refuses to celebrate Diwali. "...he would preside white powdered wig using over white powdered face hammer in hand" (P. 62). But Gyan respects the Indian culture. Gyan challenges him to recognize the contradictions he finds himself in rather than problems. Sai also resists the Indian culture like the judge, maintaining his rigidity and suppressing his potential. It shows

the barriers in their relationship and reflects the cultural conflict. The conflict between Sai and Gyan appears to be another multicultural conflict.

Another character, Biju, is a crazy young man who likes to live in Western countries and make money. He is an Indian immigrant living in the US and sacrifices for his culture and social conventions. He has been separated from his family and cannot visit them because he will not have another chance to return to the US.

You know, we can't do anything; they make us work day and night because we are illegal. Why don't you sponsor us for our green cards? Biju who dreams of the greener life. But he has the Green Card (P. 89).

He is severely affected even when his visa is issued. He could not even understand the announcements in the English language. Biju feels alienated because of his race and colour. He tries to get a stable identity but faces so many cultural conflicts. "You had to live according to something. You had to find your dignity" (P. 136). He lives an unsuccessful life and is even exploited by his Indian employee Harish Harry, the owner of the Gandhi Cafe. He has the right to stay as a worker but stays illegally. Biju's identity as an illegal immigrant in a foreign country is complex. Thus, he experiences a sense of alienation before leaving the country; and feels confused and homesick. He is unsure whether to live in the US and financially support his family or return to India. He writes a letter to his father. Then, a new person called Brittany takes Biju's work in the restaurant, and he washes the dishes. Here, he must choose whether to live as an immigrant or with his family.

This novel brought up an essential issue causing many troubles. Their love affair carries on until political dissatisfaction. One of the essential points in Desai's novel is the multicultural conflict due to living abroad. "...one side travels to be a servant, and the other travels to be treated like a king" (P. 269). Almost all the essential characters in the novel suffer from an identity shift. Jemubhai has lost everything and his identity. Sai is in a dilemma regarding her enigmatic identity. She speaks English and celebrates Christmas but belongs to a Hindu family. Meanwhile, she is entirely unaware of her religion. Biju loses his dream of success and happiness. The cook has lost his love and association with his native culture. He is not able to serve as Whiteman. In a nutshell, in her novel, Kiran Desai describes alienation and conflict between East and West.

1.2.2 Synopsis of the seasons of migration to the north

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* was initially published in English in 1969. It has been dubbed the "Most Important Arab Novel of the 20th Century" by experts. It begins when the nameless narrator goes home to Wad Hamid from London. Mustafa Saeed, a foreigner who has come into the area and married the daughter of a local guy, is the first person he encounters. The real significance of a lengthy paraphrased speech by Mustafa Saeed in Chapter 2 is not apparent until the narrator reflects on it in Chapter 9. After finishing a thesis on an English poet, the narrator returns to his hometown in search of purpose and belonging. When he sees Mustafa, though, he loses his cool. When he inquires about the guy with his trusted friend and adored grandpa, Hajj Ahmed, all he finds is that the people respect his intelligence. Nonetheless, he soon encounters Mustafa, inebriated and spouting English poetry at a pub. The narrator is troubled, and he is determined to learn the truth.

A day later, Mustafa confesses to the narrator, saying that he grew up in a hamlet near Khartoum before travelling to Egypt and London to complete his studies. In London, he rose to prominence as an economist, university professor, and womaniser, luring ladies in with African stereotypes and orientalist fantasies. On the other hand, three of his girlfriends committed suicide, and he murdered Jean Morris. As a result, he was charged with murder and sentenced to seven years in jail. Mustafa designated the narrator as guardian of his boys and wife Hosna after his death in the Nile. In addition, he has a key to a locked chamber in his home. The narrator attempts to forget about the guy, but his spirit reappears. The narrator currently works in education in Khartoum and visits Wad Hamid just twice a year. He meets folks who know Mustafa Saeed and think he is still successful and respected in London even while abroad. The narrator tries to be honest but is not always successful. He is undecided about whether Mustafa's narrative is a lesson in colonialism or a tale of depravity. The narrator is dragged further into Mustafa Saeed's storey when his grandfather's friend Wad Rayyes begs permission to marry Hosna. The narrator condemns polygamy and forced marriages between young women and elderly men like Wad Rayyes after living in Europe. The request has infuriated him. When he tells Hosna about the proposal, he realises he's in love with her. If she is forced to marry Wad Rayyes, Hosna swears she will murder him and herself.

The narrator's emotions for Hosna cause him to be perplexed. His bewilderment is compounded when, one month after leaving the area, he learns that Hosna was forced to marry the older man and then murdered him and herself. He returns to the town immediately, determined to hear the whole tale. When the narrator returns to hamlet, he discovers that he no longer understands its customs; and almost strangles his close buddy Mahjoub. His ideals about modernity and ethics suddenly clash fiercely with those of his companions, resulting in a violent deed. After that, he unlocks Mustafa Saeed's closed door and uncovers a treasure trove of non-Arabic literature, images and paintings of the man's dead wife and girlfriends, and shreds and pieces of recollections and poetry. Mustafa, believes, he left this for him to uncover and make sense of. The narrator is taken aback by the man's arrogance, as well as his wish to "be noticed" (Salih, 2009, p. 127) and remembered. In this mood of revulsion, he reads the reader's conclusion of Mustafa Saeed's confession. The events behind Jean Morris's murder are ultimately revealed: She encouraged him to murder her—and begged him to "come with her" (Salih, 2009, p. 136) into death after a romance and marriage marked by constant fighting, an oscillation between love and hatred. At this point in the storey, Hosna had unwittingly followed in the footsteps of her departed husband, killing him just as he murdered his wife. Moreover, the narrator follows Mustafa's path, falling in love with Hosna and becoming more perplexed by Europe's and Africa's connection, modernism and tradition, coloniser and colonised. In the closing paragraphs, he goes one step farther with Mustafa, who is nearly drowning in the Nile. Nevertheless, just as he is about to drown, he takes the decision to live and shouts out for aid.

1.3 Statement of the problem

All the novels' main characters in western countries usually face many troubles with the issue of their cultural identity. They suffer a lot from the feelings of belonging to a particular ethnic group. It results from the conflict between the self and the other. The struggle is between whether to accept or not the host country's culture. Eventually they are affected by the new culture and social milieu, which causes a hegemonic impact of the western culture. Therefore, they struggle between the two cultures, and eventually they accept the host country's culture due to their influence by the

surrounding environment and the social milieu. They become hybrids, and their identity has been shifted too.

Moreover, despite the fact that many scholars have dealt with the themes of identity, there is a demand for further in-depth analysis of the issue in search for a new definition of 'identity'. This is also discussed by Ninkovich (2001:16), who claims that there is a need for further analysis of identity so that our understanding of the concept could be clearer. This is based on how we identify ourselves and how we answer the question "who am I?" or "Where do I belong to?" These questions need more elaborative interpretations based on the situation of an individual and depending on time and place. It is not easy to say, 'this is my identity' as people across the globe are identified by a wide variety of identities as they live in different geographical locations with different habits, traditions and cultures.

There will be the following significant concerns regarding identity:

(a) Identity shift can be interpreted as an outcome of schism on the part of the individual owing to a sudden shift in the social order, which in turn, exercises pressure on the psyche of such a marginalized human being. This schism will lead to subsequent estimation and redefinition of selfhood with a new paradigm. (b) Identity is a social term that is established by the relationship between self and others. Identity is a phenomenon by which people identify themselves as members of different ethnical groups, nations or public classes, which provide them with a sense of belonging. (c) The concept of 'Self' is the core of consciousness and notions of identity. It is the feeling which arises out of the process of distancing and alienating by the hegemonic community in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender.

Thus, the present research work will critically examine the abovementioned views of the scholars and juxtapose the problems of identity and selfhood as projected in the selected novels.

1.4 Research objectives

- i. To investigate and explore cultural identity in the selected novels.
- ii. To examine the effect of the “self” and “other” on the characters in the selected novels.
- iii. To establish the identity shift of the main characters in the selected novels.

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