

## Identity Formation Of Oppressed Indians In Desai's *The Inheritance Of Loss* As A Postcolonial Bildungsroman

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the identity development of the protagonist in *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by utilizing the affinities of postcolonial bildungsroman according to Golban and Benli's approach (2019). The growth of Biju's identity goes through three stages: 'individual', 'intra-human', and 'professional'. He falls into misrecognition of his indigenous identity and appears rootless in his early life, where he finds himself without a definite sense of belonging to his home. After immigrating to the United States, he begins to adopt anti-colonial views and leans toward indigenism in terms of cultural rootedness and a sense of belonging. Biju's quest for a sense of belonging to his Indian home is a contemporary adventure demonstrating his anti-colonial tendency to regain his indigenous identity through decentering the West. To mark the dawn of Biju's 'self' recognition, he opposes a colonial policy of Westernization. This urges him to renounce the inherited Eurocentric perspective and assert his detachment from all colonial injustices to forge his postcolonial identity. His journey to the USA proves to be a pivotal moment in the decolonization process and formation of his postcolonial identity; thus, it is identified by the structural othering of the Western world that drives it from the center to the periphery.*

**Keywords:** bildungsroman; decolonization; Eurocentric; identity; postcolonial.

### INTRODUCTION

Kiran Desai (1971-) utilizes the affinities of postcolonial bildungsroman in *The Inheritance of Loss* to uncover the horrible face of western colonialism and its influence on the identity of oppressed Indians. The western bildungsroman is adapted by Desai to represent the adventures of Indian individuals in the East. Hence it is necessary to present the postcolonial bildungsroman and identify its features that set it apart from its Western counterpart.

The postcolonial bildungsroman is different from the Eurocentric Bildungsroman. To realize that difference, Hoagland indicates that the essential conflict of any kind of bildungsroman is between the 'ideal of the self-determination and equally demands of socialization'. She underscores that the postcolonial bildungsroman is mainly concerned with colonialism affecting characters' lives (Graham, 2019, p. 220). The postcolonial bildungsroman shows fragments of these characters' personal experiences which do not cover their whole life in a gradual development as in the Eurocentric one. Therefore, there are missing parts of their lives during a self-realization journey (Ibid, p. 226). In the postcolonial bildungsroman, is a prevailing sense of belonging to home where characters are in search for building and developing their identity (Golban & Benli, 2019, p. 4).

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Another typical feature of postcolonial bildungsroman genre is that the protagonist is a diasporic character, who tries to find his real place of belonging. He is subjected to racial insults, cultural bias and ethnic discrimination and it makes the protagonist a person of insight. The Postcolonial bildungsroman emphasizes on re-writing history, reclaiming lost identity and asserting indigenous values.

The postcolonial bildungsroman also catches the attention of postcolonial novelists to meet their “desire to incorporate the master codes of imperialism into the text, in order to sabotage them more effectively” (Graham, 2019, p. 218). Therefore, this genre brings to the surface the development of postcolonial identity of the protagonist which contributes to decolonization of the inherited colonial values to regain the voice of marginalized Indians.

However, the postcolonial bildungsroman enables the colonized to regain their voice of in the colonial paradigm. The colonial tools like bildungsroman can be used in postcolonial narratives to encounter the colonial machinery as suggested by Hoagland “Why can’t the very tools which built the house be used to dismantle it?” (2006, p. 7). This changes the postcolonial equation as the colonized would challenge the authority of the West and become more engaged in presenting their narratives and portraying their realistic history.

Moreover, the postcolonial bildungsroman as a genre threatens the West’s subjectivity, because it is designed to be subversive and “resistance narrative” (Hoagland, 2006, p. 6). It seeks to overthrow the hegemony of the West over the realm of knowledge. As resistance literature, the postcolonial bildungsroman stresses the self-realization of its protagonist to regain and shape his postcolonial identity.

Thus, the Postcolonial Identity become delineated because of the postcolonial bildungsroman in *The Inheritance of Loss* which concentrates on ‘fluid identity and location’ resulting in confusion of belonging. In fact, Desai is described as one of the “Midnight’s Grandchildren” of Salman Rushdie as she has written about new history of postcolonialism. She tackles a universal dilemma of finding a “home in the world” (Monaco, 2016). The action of her novel takes place in 1986 moving between East and West: India, England, and the USA. This shows an apparent colonial influence over the Indian identity. Desai states that “profit could only be harvested in the gap between nations, working one against the other” (Desai, 2006, p. 205). She figures out that colonizers have weakened their colonized Indians keeping them dependent and inferior to gain profit. But if the gap between them is reduced, the inferior could achieve progress, regain his power, become independent and restore his indigenous identity.

Desai has a ‘cultural transcendent identity’ as stated in the Jabberwock interview (2007), and she “comes across as someone who’s never really felt out of place no matter where she’s been”. She presents her sense of personal dislocation in *The Inheritance of Loss*, where emigration and shifting between places are vital. She has resemblance to her fictional characters as she affords “insight into what it means to travel between East and West” creating certain emotional and historical patterns. She begins to think about “the complexity of growing up in India, the changing world of my parents and grandparents, the subsequent direction of my life that is a continuation of those days and the upheavals of that time” (Stoican, 2014, p. 8). Therefore, Desai places herself as a member of the Indian diaspora based on her personal experience in the USA.

Hoagland explains that “the protagonist must experience some form of “identity flux,” which may be connected to severed ties to the tribe or community, exclusion from the dominant culture, or the conflict between individual desire and familial and cultural expectations and

demands” (Hoagland, 2006, p. 10). Hoagland identifies that to “identify further articulations of the postcolonial bildungsroman, namely religion, diaspora, and nation, which can offer additional ways to understand how the Bildungsroman has been ‘postcolonialized’...the postcolonial Bildungsroman represents both promise and challenge; it questions literary ownership and the border of the genre” (Hoagland, 2006, p. 13).

Even though the identity itself is elusive, David Huddart states that “If you know only too well where your identity ends, and the rest of the world begins, it can be easy to define that world as other, different, inferior, and threatening to your identity and interests” (2006, p. 4). It is uncontrolled by a model or any definite culture. It can be shaped, cultivated, and even changed over time. The postcolonial identity of the oppressed Indians, discussed in this study, undergoes the same principles of changeability and development. Stuart Hall describes identity as a ‘production’ that cannot be complete, and one should always think of it as “constituted within, not outside, representation” and according to him, there is an internal process that keeps identity changing (Williams, 1994, p. 222).

From another perspective, Homi Bhabha believes that identity has an innovative meaning residing beyond modern categorization that is based on ‘race’, ‘gender’, or ‘institutional location’. He considers identity relevant to subjectivity due to cultural differences which assign individual entities according to ‘singular or communal’ strategies (1994, p. 1). It originated in the individual’s conception and culture. Bhabha states that “beginnings and endings may be the sustain myths of the transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of the direction” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1). There is not a definite source for gaining and forming a person’s identity. It may be a blend of “the macro and micro, the global and local, homogeneity and heterogeneity, linearity and discontinuity, immediacy and incrementality” (Sorensen, 2018, p. 8).

Thus, there is a relationship between colonized and colonizer that stems from authoritative superiority and human benefits of interaction with each other leading to identity disarray of the colonized. Therefore, to achieve his indigenous identity, the colonized Indian needs to reject the authoritative colonizing values.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are many studies conducted over *The Inheritance of Loss*. The following are some of them that pave the road to enrich the postcolonial critique. One of the first scholars discussing the identity of Biju is Alan Cheuse (2006) who discusses how Desai pointed out that Biju was living in exile whether in his home country, India, or in the West because he was experiencing destabilized familial life. Biju was questioning his belonging to the west or India.

Biju’s ‘doubleness’ of his identity and belonging as Jayaraman (2011) explained results in his displacement and misrecognition of himself as he moved from eastern to western culture. Biju felt free at the first glance, but he became confused and entrapped within two different cultures. He obtained an imaginary identity in the USA which was fluid and unstable over time and had been changed by social and cultural challenges. Jayaraman also discussed colonial and postcolonial aspects creating Biju’s diasporic identity. Therefore, he got-through characters’ experiences of both eastern and western cultures that created a sense of belonging and unbelonging to home like Biju was strangled between American and Indian cultures. Jayaraman asserted that Biju became self-alienated and unfamiliar with his indigenous identity.

Stoican (2014) considered migrants’ return to their home, especially South Asians living in England or the USA, as a reaction to colonial and postcolonial mistreatment. She discussed

reasons behind a migrants' decision to go back to India and analyzed how those migrants responded to social and cultural challenges which forced most of them to retreat and adjust their attitude towards the West as an unwelcoming place for them. Biju felt that he was unwelcome in the USA.

Albuhamdan and Swain (2020) discussed Indians' diaspora in the novel and highlighted their struggle to achieve their self-recognition while living in the West under colonial influence. The researchers elucidated how Biju was trying to accommodate himself to American culture and trying to keep his Indian identity. They thought that Biju became disappointed and worthless in America. He felt insecure and rejected because of his cultural differences. The researchers considered the novel to be a sincere expression of human imagination to explore self-awareness of modern social illnesses like racial discrimination that deprived Indians like Biju from self-recognition in western community.

Sunmugam, et. al., (2015) explored postcolonial double-consciousness, resistance and othering causing identity dilemma of Biju and other Indians in Desai's novel through an essentialist theoretical lens. The researchers discussed the effects of hierarchical system and postcolonial influence over the identity of privileged and less-privileged Indians in their homeland and foreign land. Biju was working hard to build up a high-rank identity rather than his inherited identity. He wanted to improve his social status and achieve self-recognition. His resistance to low-status position brought him social degradation and identity dilemma; he felt inferior whenever facing a western individual. To set the problematic nature of the identity of these Indians like Biju, the researchers explained how postcolonial influence highly contributed to the misrepresentation of Indians like Biju in western culture. These Indians became afraid of mistreatment because they were typically introduced as inferior and unequal to any western counterpart. Even after withdrawal of western colonialism from India, its impact is still persistent and affects their identity formation.

Other scholars like Martins (2016), looked at the construction of identity of Biju and other Indians from historical perspective. There were ideological and economical events forming a collective historical sense building their cultural identity.

From an ethical perspective, Monaco (2016) pointed out that Biju ignored his cultural differences and tried to construct a new perception to connect with both Indian and western cultures. Biju mirrors the recent postcolonial problematics stemming from social and cultural globalization, which fit global concerns of transnationalism. He was attached to two homes experiencing social and cultural transformations.

Reflecting the deep colonial influence over Indians in the novel, Revathi (2019) studied 'socio-political' matters incorporated in Indian identity construction. The identity crisis disclosed a colonial impact on Biju in the civilized world. Revathi stated that Desai presented Biju facing difficulties in his life like poverty which brought him a tremendous discomfort and obliged him to move into a foreign country where he received cruel treatment not only from western people, but also from native Indians.

Based on an ethnic approach, Babli Sinha (2019) tackled social inequality and the suffering of neoliberals who belong to different ethnic groups. They lived isolated in slums away from civilized people, thus became depressed and felt insecure towards their ethnicity, social class, and religion; they were haunted by a psychological breakdown leading them to anxiety, depression and 'hopelessness'. This hopelessness alienated oppressed Indians from their society and intensifying their struggles. They wanted to belong to a higher class and obtain equality and power. Biju suffered from racial discrimination in western countries which

brought him 'self-hatred.' He is supposed to be successful and self-satisfied as he had worked in the USA, but on the contrary of that, he became depressed.

Focusing on resistance against colonialism, Xu (2020) analyzed Biju's internal struggle to attain his identity getting double consciousness through resistance against inferiority and over-dominance of colonial power. Biju was described as a disappointed victim of displacement confronting a western culture in the USA by which he became alienated and senseless. Another example in the novel, Jemubhai encountered similar cultural trauma while he was studying at Cambridge University. He encountered racial discrimination from the first moment in London; no one wanted to rent him a place to live. British people saw him different; he was not white and did not carry similar religious beliefs. After being rejected for more than 20 times, a landlord rented him a house, but she was reluctant to deal with him. Moreover, he had been rejected by British people who thought he had a bad smell because of eating curry, so they used to cover their noses whenever they passed by him. He mostly worked alone to keep himself away from cultural clashes, which gradually isolated him and damaged his identity.

Xu also pointed out that westernized cultural influence was imposed on Indians, who were affected by colonial over-dominance. For instance, the Judge's wife, Nimi, was isolated and lonely because she was humiliated and enslaved by her husband, who became her master like a typical British colonizer. He hardly tried to be part of western culture, but that was in vain as he still carries Indian features. Therefore, the inner postcolonial cultural trauma of Jemubhai hurt his wife and brought him identity loss.

Other researchers like Monaco (2016) discusses memories to understand social and ethical negligence in Indian society in Desai's novel. He believes that a major concern of most postcolonial Indian fiction is endurance of partition which has catastrophic consequences resulting in violence and brutality in the Indian community leading to social subdivisions. Monaco considers *The Inheritance of Loss* a manifesto against "the backdrop of the Gorkhaland movement" in the mid-1980s, which aimed at violent fighting and getting an independent region. That indicates a constant colonial influence over the Indian social life like Biju's. On the contrary, Menon (2016) confirms that Desai intends to find a stable relationship between Indian and Western cultures serving globalization in her novel. The novel works as a postcolonial accommodation to the First World and its power as a strong inclination towards globalization of migrants (p. 74).

Mishra appreciates Desai's confrontation of cultural impurity as suggested in his title "Wounded by the West." John Sutherland also finds the novel as a globalized portrayal of 'multicultural reverberations. Desai describes the novel as "acute anxiety of being a foreigner;" expressing the East and West relationship in postcolonial context (Menon, 2016, p. 78).

To sum up, Desai depicts the postcolonial environment resulting in identity dilemma of oppressed Indians like Biju. This study agrees with the above studies asserting that there is constant colonial influence reinforcing marginalization and oppression to weaken Indians and keep them dependent on the West. Therefore, this study adopts a postcolonial approach based on the postcolonial bildungsroman to surf deeper and understand the postcolonial identity of marginalized Biju.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Significance of the Study**

There are many literary studies conducted to digest identity formation of marginalized Indians in Desai's novel, but this study differs as it investigates this questionable issue of Biju's postcolonial identity as postcolonial bildungsroman.

Eastern ways of thinking are undermined by Western narratives. The postcolonial bildungsroman "reveals that the cultural and ideological roots of the genre have been modified as well as contested as the genre is appropriated by writers who exist and write outside of the genre's traditional pale". These writers employ the genre to examine how colonialism harmed and destroyed indigenous identity and culture; it is a tool for asserting and reclaiming lost histories and identities to promote both individual and community healing. (Hoagland,2006, p. iv).

This study is not a means for widening a racial segregation and division, but rather a means to understand postcolonial aspects of the identity development of marginalized people like Biju. This study underscores the stages of development of Biju's postcolonial identity. He attains disillusionment as he starts subsiding his Westernized spectacles which tainted his vision and later becomes anti-colonial. Biju's awakening leads him to reconfigure his social ties and exclude himself from inherited colonial values. The extensive investigation of the growth journey of Biju unfolds how he develops his indigenous identity and free himself from the inherited colonial burden.

### **Problem of the Study**

Most postcolonial studies over *The Inheritance of Loss* have created an impetus for exploration of the colonial influence on the identity formation of marginalized Indians. There is still a research gap needed to be handled to unpack the aspects of self-realization of Biju and resolve the blurring image of his identity.

Biju, as a marginalized Indian, appears as a homeless at the beginning of his life. He even feels as socially excluded, without any specific identity in his indigenous culture. Then, he goes through a self-revelation journey and experiences the influence of Western Colonization that has reinforced the inherited colonial environment keeping the colonized unable to decide his own destiny.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Employing a thematic analysis, this postcolonial study investigates the characteristics of the postcolonial bildungsroman of Biju. It also traces the stages of development of his postcolonial identity. In addition, it explains how Biju tries to regain his indigenous identity and reattach himself to the Indian culture.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This study employs qualitative textual analysis to examine the identity of Biju in *The Inheritance of Loss* as postcolonial bildungsroman. This analysis provides access to the hidden realm of marginalized Indians like Biju and helps locate the missing jigsaw pieces pertaining to the development of his indigenous identity.

The present study adopts the postcolonial approach of Golban and Benli (2019) who indicate that there are three disciplines that govern identity development in the postcolonial bildungsroman: individual, 'intra-human', and 'professional'. The individual development mirrors personal perspectives of the character, while the 'intra-human' development goes beyond the individual himself to include the character's family, marriage, love and similar

relationships. The 'professional' development goes beyond the individual and 'intra-human' to cover wider social and moral aspects.

According to Baxter (2020), since fictional texts are situated in time and space, they are replete with social structures and processes which invariably create, sustain, or disrupt phenomena in the social world. Hence, he avers that textual analysis enables the investigation of subjugated meanings, particularly ones representing the power dynamics at play in the social setting, a view echoed by Fatima et.al. (2021) who has applied a textual analysis approach to locate elements of marginalization in Intizar Hussain's *The Desolate City*, an Indo-Pak postcolonial novel and comes to conclusions that despite being in their homeland, British power has marginalized the locals either linguistically, economically, religiously, or socially.

The current study utilizes a similar research design which aligns with its objectives and seeks to provide insightful, theoretically informed, and conceptually organized answers to the relevant research questions. The data analysis goes through four stages: contextualize, explore, analyze and interpret.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

The postcolonial bildungsroman is employed in postcolonial context and adapted to serve its critique for the sake of approaching indigenous Indian culture influenced by colonialism and to de-center its Western counterpart. This empowers marginalized Indians like Biju to speak out their own voices. In the present study, three disciplines are implemented to explore Biju's postcolonial identity development in *The Inheritance of Loss* as a postcolonial bildungsroman: individual, intra-human, and professional development according to Golban & Benli's approach (2019).

According to the first principle of 'individual development,' Biju tries connecting with others, and he sometimes opts for separation because of his suspicion over his identity. He was the only child for a poor family and his mother died when he was five (Desai, 2006, p. 21). He tries to achieve his self-realization away from the heavy burden imposed on him by his class, ethnicity, caste, and religion. At the level of his individual development, he moves to the USA and tries to adapt himself in the American society, but he distorts his indigenous identity. He used to be enchanted to the western values at the expense of his indigenous individuality.

Biju carves his new individuality when he dislocates the colonial values stifling his worldview. The emphasis on Biju's self-awareness is an important characteristic of the postcolonial bildungsroman. Therefore, he becomes familiar with the discriminatory values adopted by the colonial paradigm. For example, in a phone call with his father, Biju expresses his homesickness as he wants to weep. His father asks him, "WHEN ARE YOU COMING?" and Biju does not know the answer and he could not attain a holiday to see his father. After this conversation "the emptiness Biju hoped to dispel was reinforced" (Desai, 2006, pp. 238-39). Therefore, Biju consciously drifts away from the colonial ways and tilts towards nationhood. Biju's journey towards selfhood, independence and nationhood signifies his anti-colonial growth. Drifting away from the colonial ways and shifting towards his Indian culture is an assertion of selfhood. Biju denounces the colonizing culture of the West robbing his vision of life. He turns against the the USA for outwardly being a home to all cultures and treating him as a cultural other due to his Indian background. His mistreatment shatters the illusions about the glamour of the USA and prompts him to reconsider his ideological leanings. Biju makes up his mind to bring the USA to the periphery from the center. It amounts to the USA's theoretical fall from grace, and it will be achieved by employing the tools of the master. As soon as he

witnesses ostracization in America at firsthand, American idealism becomes a nightmare. Subsequently, Biju becomes disillusioned about his existence in the USA as a cultural outsider.

Concerning the second principle of ‘Intra-human development,’ Biju feels alienated and outcast at the level of ‘intra-human’ level at the beginning of his life. He is caught up by instability in his Indian society since he does not have any original feelings towards his family or society. When he comes to any social contact, he experiences “unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 11). He feels ‘unhomely’ and ambivalent because he is contaminated by the Western colonizing heritage.

He finds himself in an unavoidable state of identity disarray in the USA. He experiments instability in New York; He “worked at Don Polio—or was it The Hot Tomato? Or Ali Baba’s Fried Chicken? His father could not remember or understand or pronounce the names, and Biju changed jobs so often, like a fugitive on the run—no papers” (Desai, 2006, p. 10). Therefore, he struggles at the level of his social existence to attach himself to his Indian culture despite the inherited colonial impact since he becomes aware that “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 1989, p. 2). He feels alienated when he is jobless, therefore he goes to Nandu, his father’s friend living in the USA for a long time, who advises him, “If I were a young man, I would go back to India, more opportunities there now” (Desai, 2006, p. 105). Biju’s awareness of the awful discriminatory values of the West changes his attitudes and withdraws his affection from that culture. He exceeds that to hatred of the West and its values. He resists being treated as inhuman and intends to structure his selfhood away from western culture.

Biju tries to resolve his conflicts and reshape his identity, “his self-consciousness, his self-pity- oh the tediousness of it. Clumsy in America, a giant-sized midget, a big fat-sized helping of small . . . Shouldn’t he return to a life where he might slice his own importance, to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his own destiny and perhaps be subtracted from its determination altogether? He might even experience that greatest luxury of not noticing himself at all” (Desai, 2006, p. 275). Thus, he returns to his Indian culture. He rejects the ideal image of the colonized presented by the West, and he is not enchanted anymore with the Western colonizing values devastating his own indigenous identity.

Regarding the third principle of ‘professional’ development, Biju finds out where he belongs and disassociates himself from the Western influence over his knowledge. His shift towards selfhood, nationhood and decolonization are signs of disconnecting with Western colonialism. He receives social degradation in the USA as being a poor Indian. For instance, the wife of the Italian restaurant owner in New York looks down and dislikes Biju due to his Indian smell. Moreover, “she had hoped for men from the poorer parts of Europe—Bulgarians perhaps, or Czechoslovakians. At least they might have something in common with them like religion and skin color, grandfathers who ate cured sausages and looked like them, too, but they weren’t coming in numbers great enough or they weren’t coming desperate enough” (Desai, 2006, p. 55).

He breaks free from colonial control and intends to recover his indigenous Indian identity. He changes his perception of life as he discovers Western fake values like dishonesty, discrimination, and injustice. Consequently, he develops his hatred of Western dominance over India as a sign of departing from the colonial mindset. This is the first step of decolonization that Biju takes to recover his individuality and voice. As he encounters the discriminatory values of the West, Biju realizes the real existence of himself. Therefore, he subverts Eurocentrism to defend his indigenous identity. His anti-colonial beliefs shape and determine



his postcolonial identity. He pays more attention to inherited discriminatory values imposed by colonial impact on fellow Indians whether in the USA or India.

Biju finds his path when he starts decentering the West. The main goal of Western colonialism is to keep the colonized like Biju weak, oppressed, and marginalized. The Western colonizers have anticipated that their values would prevail forever over the colonized. After being under imperial rule for decades, the Indians have been subjugated by colonial policies. The colonizer was expecting that the colonizer was unable to regain his subjectivity. Biju experiences postcolonial awakening, and he modifies his perspective towards the West. To restore his indigenous identity, he rejects Western ideologies depriving him from liberating himself and keeping him under colonial hegemony. Biju attempts to forge his own identity, expand his 'self-consciousness', and put an end to his misrecognition of himself in the USA and "return to a life where he might slice his importance, to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his destiny and perhaps be subtracted from its determination altogether?" (Desai, 2006, p. 275). When he realizes he doesn't fit in with the American culture, he attempts to recapture his indigenous identity and indulge himself against the colonizing influence.

The ingrained Western ideologies in Indian culture have influenced Biju's worldview. Biju's contempt for the USA is an obvious result of his exposure to Western colonizing culture. His ignorance is demonstrated by his incapacity to delve deeper into the issues at hand. By viewing the West as the preservers of Indian values and the bearers of civilization, Biju makes a broad assertion before his own experience in the USA. It is the colonial inheritance guiding him to align his ideologies with the West.

The imperial attempt to subvert Biju's outlook on life through acceptance of the superiority of the West, has accelerated his anti-colonial maturation. Biju becomes conscious of the imperial plan to keep Indians marginalized and absent from the center of power. This steering factor in the innovative formation of Biju's identity. In this respect, Hoagland elucidates this feature of the postcolonial bildungsroman contributing to "the ongoing remediation of colonialism's traumatic legacy throughout the self-maturation process" (Graham, 2019, p. 219). Therefore, Biju's anti-colonial evolution stems from his terrible experience of othering in the USA. This is a turning point in his life where he begins to feel exposed everywhere like an outcast. Biju seeks a sense of belonging and stability in his life. His sense of homelessness is increased the United States since he faces rejection being an Indian. He believes a sense of impending disaster hangs over India. He is filled with a pessimistic anticipation that anarchy focuses on India. The marginalized Indians feel uneasy in the new India because everything appears to be backward. Biju's development of identity is directly linked to his experiences of marginalization.

In fact, Biju's identity development follows a nonlinear pattern. He experiences a spectrum of feelings, including marginalization, oppression, homesickness, homelessness, frustration, and disillusionment. He has a profound shift in how he views the USA and starts to find nothing particularly noteworthy about his life in the USA. His postcolonial identity comes to surface since he moves to the USA. He significantly minimizes the significance of life by reducing it to the feeling of pleasure and suffering. As a result of his disillusionment with the West, he believes that his existence in the USA has no purpose. To him, the desire to succeed in life or pursue happiness in the West is a lie. He experiences an existential crisis because of the illusion of happiness and misery; his life begins to spiral downward. It suggests that Biju has developed a wider vision. At this time, he can make a connection with the greater reality. It is the turning point in the postcolonial bildungsroman when Biju begins to see the West as the source of all evil. As a result of his traumatic experiences, he matures intellectually and takes aim at the

West for splitting his allegiance between East and West. In his post-awakening phase, he represents anti-imperialism, resistance, and liberty.

Part of his decolonization process, Biju chooses to get rid of imperial notions and artifacts. He withdraws from Western influence and disassociates himself from the American colonizing values. He can see through the deception used by the West to get him to adopt its beliefs. His life does not revolve around the West after this intellectual awakening. During the post-awakening stage, he shatters all the bonds of imprisonment and firmly expresses his disdain for the West. After regaining his voice, he bellows harshly at the West for enslaving him to its beliefs. Throughout the course of the novel, he changes from being an admirer of the West to a detractor of it. He fiercely calls out the deceit of the West's attempt to bring about civilization in India. He criticizes the way the West conducts itself in India. The West's attitude toward Indians is hypocritical. They pretend to be loyalists when they began a colonization campaign in India. Although the Indians can oppose Western cultural dominance, their gullibility permits the West to execute its imperialist plans in India. The West considers itself to be the superior race and feels it is their mission to lead other races.

Unmasking the reality of the West's superiority, Biju starts to reject it. It demonstrates that the USA is not the ideal society that Western narratives portray. The West is no longer seen by Biju as an opportunity. He manages to return to his country, and he is thrilled: "Biju stepped out of the airport into the Calcutta night, warm, mammalian. His feet sank into dust winnowed to softness at his feet, and he felt an unbearable feeling, sad and tender, old and sweet like the memory of falling asleep, a baby on his mother's lap" (Desai, 2006, p. 307).

Consequently, he intellectually becomes mature because of his uneasy experiences in the USA where he questions the Western civilizing mission depriving Indians of their indigenous identity and leaving their future uncertain and. After coming home "he felt everything shifting and clicking into place around him, felt himself slowly shrink back to size, the enormous anxiety of being a foreigner ebbing—that unbearable arrogance and shame of the immigrant...His vision unblurred and he found that he could see clearly" (Desai, 2006, p. 307). He concludes that Western imperialism would never bring happiness to the Indians. This is a symbolic method of mocking the West for the injustices, crimes, and brutalities it inflicted upon the indigenous Indians. It equates to the marginalized moving from the margins to the heart of the power system and the West becoming metaphorically peripheral.

### **Conclusion**

Biju is aware of his identity disarray nourished by colonial heritage. Being treated as a colonized and marginalized Indian, he could not obtain 'fixed' identification of himself. He feels 'unhomely' and oppressed in the USA. Although it is contested that the colonized revert to primitivism, as per the colonial doctrine, he exhibits resentful encounters with the colonial machinery and becomes the subject as he reverses the roles and decenters the Western culture in the postcolonial paradigm. In fact, Biju's awareness of the heavy burden of colonialism develops his postcolonial identity. He adopts anticolonial attitudes that deny and reject enslaving techniques implemented by colonizers, undermines their thoughts, exposes their lies, and forges a unique identity for himself. This represents a significant advancement to build his independent postcolonial identity away from colonial inequality. His struggle to form his indigenous identity exposes the malicious Western manipulation of the Indian narrative. After his experience in the USA, Biju declares his disdain for the Western colonizing values and distances himself from them. Biju's confrontation with racial discrimination of the West creates his intellectual maturity. He perceives the USA as the center of good values, but after growth

journey and awakening, he rebels against it. His disillusionment with the real face of the West becomes as incentive to reshape and regain his indigenous identity.

To sum up, the postcolonial identity of Biju undergoes a substantial transformation. Thus, the postcolonial bildungsroman affords marginalized and oppressed individuals like Biju the opportunity to reclaim their indigenous identity. This jots down that the Western colonization fails to achieve its objective of erasing and destroying the indigenous identity of oppressed Indians like Biju.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to acknowledge and thank the journal team of Migration Letters that help publish this article.

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