



Impact of Migrated Identity on the Protagonist in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

Ruqnaz Bibi^{*a}, Raheela Kundi^b, Shumaila Mushtaq^c

- a. MPhil Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, KP, Pakistan
- b. Lecturer of English, Govt Girls Degree College Tank, Tank, KP, Pakistan
- c. Graduated, NUML University, Islamabad, Pakistan

ARTICLE INFO

Received:

August 12, 2025

Revision Received:

August 29, 2025

Accepted:

September 05, 2025

Available Online:

September 09, 2025

Keywords:

migrated identity,
diaspora,
postcolonialism,
cultural hybridity,
psychological impact,
Kiran Desai.

ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the role played by migrated identity on the main character of the book *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai and the implications it had on the psychological, cultural and social aspects of the diasporic experiences. The research is of qualitative nature, with content and thematic analysis to aid in exploring how the main character Biju is bargaining his identity in the postcolonial and globalizing societies. The main themes revealed are cultural hybridity, alienation, nostalgia, and social memory that are evaluated using the theoretical frameworks of postcolonial, diasporic, and social psychologists. The results demonstrate that migrated identity plays a significant role in defining the identity of the protagonist, his social life, and emotional state, which demonstrates the indication of a complicated interaction between internal and external processes within the context of diasporic consciousness. This work provides to the contribution of the further comprehension of the migration, identity, and cultural negotiation in modern literature.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Postcolonial and diasporic literature has focused on migration, displacement, and negotiation of identity as its central thematic concerns. The world has become more global and people and communities have to cross geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, which usually results in the feelings of alienation, hybridity, and fractured belonging. According to Stuart Hall (1990), cultural identity does not exist as an entity, but as a process and it is constantly determined by historical conditions, social classes, and cultural relations. Such a theoretical approach is especially applicable in exploring migrant identities, whereby people have to balance the inherited traditions with the host society requirements. Such reconciliation can hardly lead to harmony, but rather causes tension, resistance and ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994).

* Correspondence to: Department of English Language and Literature, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, KP, Pakistan
E-mail address: ruqnazruqnaz@gmail.com (R. Bibi).



These tensions are shed more light by the discourse on diaspora. Diaspora, according to Avtar Brah (1996), should be viewed more as a question of desire; the desire of belonging that can never be achieved physically, although it remains badly needed. Similarly, James Clifford (1994) describes a diaspora as the societies that are not that localized and not that foreign, connected and disconnected. The contradictions that migrants face in general, according to these theoretical perspectives, are on the one hand, in pursuit of stability migrants tend to end up as excluded and alienated and that results in fragmented identities rather than complete ones.

It is in this currency of the intellect that this book, *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai (2006) brings in as a tremendous literary work exploring psychological, cultural and social impacts of migration. The novel has gained the Man Booker Prize and it narrates the lives of the migrants, as manifested by the fortunes of Biju in the United States and the life of those who have not migrated such as Sai who has to grapple with the post-colonial legacies and globalization. The novel is not a glorified image of the migration process; it is a depiction of the actualities of migration, where belonging is never arrived at and where the identity itself becomes a source of conflict. Researchers have termed the work by Desai as a form of twofold displacement with characters being torn between the host country and the home country, encompassing the paradoxes of the diaspora (Shrestha, 2023; Albuhamdan, Anthony, and Swain, 2022).

This tension between conformity and resistance is what defines the identity of the protagonist in *The Inheritance of Loss*. The characters, like Biju, are trying to conform to the norms of the diaspora to begin with, and thinking that the assimilation to Western norms is a sure way to success. These aspirations are however interrupted by their experiences of systemic racism, economic exploitation and cultural alienation. The novel shows that assimilation never occurs without charge, but at the expense of forgetting or not acknowledging one heritage, which causes the fragmented self. This is consistent with the idea of hybridity as postcolonial subject occupies a third space of negotiation, which is neither part of the realms of either culture (Homi Bhabha, 1994). This hybridity is not emancipating in the sense that it is happening in the novel by Desai but destabilizing since it emphasizes the fact that no one can entirely belong to either of the two spaces.

Moreover, *The Inheritance of Loss* is an expression of the psychological effects of migration. Social psychological studies have revealed that migrants tend to make their own selves doubt their own self, alienated, and at some instances, they even despise themselves because of the prevailing standards that are adopted by the wider society (Halprin, 1995; Grogan, 2008). Blood (2005) suggests that in the absence of a broader supporting system or even acknowledgement of their cultures, migrants are susceptible to deviant identity formation whereby they compare themselves to the unachievable standards of success or beauty as defined by the Western media. This struggle is demonstrated in the novel through embarrassing experiences that Biju went through in the United States as an undocumented worker. He is spiritually lapsed and this landscape leaves him in a trap of invisibility and rejection as he cannot live up to the demands of the host society.

Sai who is the other major protagonist is a reflection of another facet of lost identity. Though she does not physically move, her English education, colonialism, and detached relationship with her grandfather make her an outsider in her own country. This shows how pervasive colonialism is, as Edward Said (1978) in *Orientalism* has illustrated that internalized inferiority structures are formed under the influence of colonialism, which are not soon forgotten following the political emancipation. Sai represents the psychological colonization of the elite who are torn between the admiration of the West and alienation with her Indian origin. By so doing, Desai depicts that migration is not geographical only, but also cultural and psychological, stretching to those people who stay in postcolonial countries.

The other framework of importance in the analysis of identity in the novel is the concept of social memory. Since childhood, people learn language, rituals, traditions and values which determine the worldview. All these factors, which are commonly known as social memory, are destroyed upon the migration of the people to unfamiliar places where this knowledge is no longer appreciated or accepted (Assmann, 2010). The home memories plague the characters in the story of Desai and remain a source of consoling and reminders of what they have lost. When Biju recalls the memories of India, e.g., it is excruciatingly compared to his life in the United States where he becomes a marginalized laborer. Equally, the disjointed family history and the hybrid background of Sai portrays the colonialism and migration as destabilizing the social memory.

Individual struggles in the novel are also placed in the larger socio-political situations. The locales, the Northeastern Himalayas and New York streets, are highlighted to give emphasis on the inequalities in the world and how these inequalities determine the fate of an individual. The Kalimpong insurgency presents the political instability of the postcolonial countries, and the experiences of Biju in other countries reveal the economic exploitation of the migrant labor force. The presence of such backgrounds locates personal identity crisis within the global processes of power, and how colonial past and contemporary globalization overlap to create displacement (Jannet & Prabhu, 2017; Mishra and Pandey, 2021).

Therefore, this paper places *The Inheritance of Loss* under the postcolonial and diaspora studies to understand the effects of migrated identity on the protagonist. The paper will explore the cultural displacement of individual identity by using theoretical approaches of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), diaspora (Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994), and cultural identity (Hall, 1990), and psychological approaches to identity formation (Grogan, 2008; Blood, 2005). The novel of Desai is not just a literary story; it is also an entry point to the larger situation of the postcolonial subject who attempts to find its position in the globalized and simultaneously unequal world. The fact that the protagonists have fragmented identities is indicative of the paradox of migration in that the search of belonging frequently results in further alienation, the legacy of migration, in turn, is a legacy of loss.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Migration is usually romanticized as a way to advance and get a new chance, yet literature and sociology reveal that it is also the source of identity crisis, alienation and disrupted sense of belonging. *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai (2006) is a very interesting book that presents the problems of these complications because it tells the story of Biju, a migrant Indian who is undocumented in the United States and Sai, who feels out of place in her own lands. Although Desai is critically recognized to have created an excellent novel, there has been little research on the psychological and cultural aspects of the migrated identity as reflected in the protagonists.

The issue that this paper seeks to fill is that, whereas the literature has examined the themes of diaspora, postcolonialism and hybridity in the works of Desai, the aspect of migration, both physical and psychological, and how it redefines the identity of the protagonists has not been examined. The fact that Biju moved to another country and Sai was alienated inside the country evidence that migration is not just geographical, but also very cultural and emotional. However, subtle means through which migrated identity disrupts belonging, breaks memory, and creates colonial legacies has not been explored well enough. This study, thus, attempts to explore the effect of migrated identity on the psychological, cultural and social positioning of the protagonists in *The Inheritance of Loss*.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The present study is meaningful because of a number of reasons. First, it works towards the enhancement of postcolonial literary criticism in laying a deeper insight into the impact of migration on the creation of identity. Although the theorization of hybridity, cultural identity, and diaspora has been made by theorists like Bhabha (1994), Hall (1990) and Brah (1996), the application of the three theories to the novel by Desai offers an understanding of the actual reality of the migrants and their descendants. The study emphasizes how the struggles of the characters represent more general concerns of displacement, inequality, and alienation in the globalized world that is stratified. Second, the paper brings out the psychological effects of migration. It sheds light through the internal conflict of the main characters who cannot fit in the new culture and cannot go back to the homeland where the issue of cross-cultural clash will not have a solution. This kind of perception is not only beneficial to the interpretation of literature but also associated with other areas such as sociology and psychology where the problem of identity crisis among migrants is a burning concern.

Third, the study findings of this research are pedagogical. The analysis to students and scholars in the English literature points to literature as a voice of struggling voices. It is also the input into the study of diaspora by foreseeing the impact of the migration process not only on the economic situation but also on the identity of the individual person and the cultural identity. Finally, in the context of a globalized world, where migration is becoming increasingly common due to economic necessity, political conflict and climate change, the research is highly relevant. By illuminating the novel by Desai, this study provides the faint understanding of the general dilemma that migrants must resolve- dilemma that continues to afflict the displaced groups in the world.

1.4. Research Objectives

- To analyze how the experiences of migration shape the psychological, cultural, and social identity of the protagonist in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*.
- To examine the ways in which the novel reflects the complexities of diasporic consciousness, including alienation, hybridity, and displacement, in the context of postcolonial identity formation.

1.5. Research Questions

1. How does migrated identity influence the protagonist's psychological and cultural sense of self in *The Inheritance of Loss*?
2. In what ways does Desai's narrative highlight the tensions between assimilation, alienation, and hybridity within the diasporic experience of the protagonist?

1.6. Purpose of the Study

This paper aims at discussing how migrated identity affects the protagonist in *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai. The purpose of the given research is to critically analyze the psychological, cultural, and social impact of migration as depicted in the novel with specific focus on the topic of alienation, hybridity or displacement. Through the examination of the lived experiences of Biju and other main characters in the story, the research aims to show how migration reconstructs identity and brings about conflicts between belonging and non-belonging. Moreover, this paper aims at locating the work by Desai in the general context of the postcolonial and diaspora literature, thus illustrating that literature is a mirror of migrant life and critiques its intricate nature. It is not only meant to shed light on the plight of the protagonist but also meant to help in the larger insight into the current troubles of migration and its role in undermining the old concepts of identity, memory and culture continuity in the globalized world.

1.7. Delimitations of the Study

The present study is also restricted to *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai (2006) as the main text with a particular emphasis on the effect that the identity of migrated has on the main character, Biju. Although the novel introduces other characters, including Sai, the Judge, and Gyan, who go through the process of cultural dislocation and colonial residue, the paper will focus more on the case of the migration of Biju in the United States as a case of diasporic struggle. The study is also restricted to the study of identity formation by applying the postcolonial theory and diaspora studies and especially on the concepts of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), cultural identity (Hall, 1990), and diaspora consciousness (Brah, 1996). The wider socio-political aspects of globalization, economic migration or comparison of this novel with other diaspora novels are out of the scope of this work. The restriction of the analysis to these limits has also allowed the study to confine its attention to the influence of migration on individual identity and psychological experience in the context of the narrative by Desai without straying into, say, gender-only studies, economy of migration statistics, or even cross-country comparative migration behavior.

2. Literature Review

The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai is the very complex story of the migrants who have to cope with their identities in the new territories and the postcolonial world. The novel draws the issues of cultural displacement, social alienation and the psychological strains of existing in-between-two worlds. As Shrestha (2023) stresses, the novel is a symptom of diasporic consciousness in the sense that the identity of the characters, especially Biju, is not complete, which cannot adapt to the realities of assimilation in the United States because of his heritage as an Indian. Equally, Albuhamdan, Anthony, and Swain (2022) mention that the identity of the protagonists in the post-colonial context is negotiated on a constant basis, and it represents the conflict between belonging and alienation. According to these studies, migrated identity in the work of Desai is not only physical but very psychological and culturally constructed.

Shrestha (2022) also notes that the novel is an illustration of postcolonial identity change since characters internalize Western norms, which lead to culture adaptation and identity dislocation. The same theme of ambivalent cultural negotiation can be traced to Kamal Shrestha (n.d.), who notices that migrants are in some ambiguity zone as they are attracted and repelled by the cultural norms of the native and foreign cultures. This duality is a decisive element that should be considered in the lived experience of migration in the narrative by Desai because it highlights the constant tension between adaptation and resistance.

Bhabha (1994) introduced theoretical approaches of hybridity and mimicry, which are imperative in the analysis of the identities of the main characters in the book. According to Bhabha, the postcolonial subject is a third space; a negotiation space where cultural identity never heals but is always shifting. This idea corresponds with the claims of Jackson (2016) who demonstrates that the aspect of globalization and cosmopolitanism makes people realize their identities, creating hybrid ones that switches in accordance with the local and global cultural perceptions. Clifford (1994) and Brah (1996) emphasize that the diasporic people are in-between spaces, and they bargain the belonging to various cultural, linguistic and social settings.

Sukheeja and Bhangu (n.d.) build on this viewpoint noting that physical and emotional mobility enhance hybridity. The migrants face structural and social disparities, mental strain of adjusting to new cultural rules. These hybrid and liminal states are the key to the psychological and social aspect of migrated identity in the work by Desai as the characters are constantly torn between the expectations of home and the hostland. The politics of belonging and the postcolonial histories shape the struggle of the protagonists. According to Hall (1990), cultural identity is historically produced and in the process of change, and this assumption allows viewing the changing self-concepts of the characters in the novel of Desai as being fluid. Said (1978) elaborates that colonial legacies result in internalized superiority and inferiority complexes, shown by the subjects who desire to imitate the western ideals and the sense of inadequacy in new situations.

According to Brah (1996), Diaspora scholarship applies the concept of duality of displacement and homing desire. As it is emphasized in the EJELLS study (2020) and Jackson (2016), the experiences of migrants are determined not only by the geographical migration but also by the socio-cultural, emotional negotiation. Laxmiprasad (n.d.) explains the contrast of native and non-native space using which Desai shows the limitations that migrants have in claiming identity and belonging, which is a complicated mixture of memory, cultural norms, and the socio-economic pressures. Migration has massive psychological impacts in form of alienation, self-doubt and fragmentation of identity. The articles by Blood (2005) and Grogan (2008) on the role of social and cultural pressure on the body image and self-perception can be extended to more general identity issues in the migrant experiences. Halprin (1995) points out that the absence of social support factors leads to migrants adopting unrealistic ideals that may translate to self-loathing and distorted self-concepts.

Panicacci (n.d.) notes emotional and linguistic changes that migrants have to adapt to, which involves cognitive and affective work of orienting oneself in numerous cultural regimes. These effects can be traced perfectly in the life of Biju, who, as in the story by Desai, begins his journey in the United States and sees the impact of marginalization, labor precarity, and alienation of culture by which the stress of identity negotiation intensifies (Ammal, n.d.). The psychological strain is further enforced by the feeling of alienation to their cultural background, which continues to prove the complicated mix of social, cultural, and emotional influences on the development of the migrant identity.

Assmann (2010) understands social memory as the store of cultural knowledge, traditions and shared experiences. The memories of home, family, and childhood of the characters in *The Inheritance of Loss* serve as the anchors of cultural identity in the face of displacement (Shrestha, 2023; Komal Rashmi and Kumar, n.d.). Nevertheless, the memories also compound the loss feeling, since they are colliding with the facts of foreign cultural and social realities. Such a contradiction between memory and experience of being places emphasis on the difficulty of the protagonists in finally balancing past and present identities and points to the psychological consequences of nostalgia and cultural dislocation.

Though the dominance of the male migration experiences is apparent in the narrative, the works of Komal Rashmi and Kumar (n.d.) indicate that the identity of the diaspora cuts across gender. Women characters strive to deal with cultural demands and social rules in different ways, and their experiences of migration indicate unique issues. The comparative studies of Anita Desai and Kiran Desai also help to understand the experience of displacement of women that add to the understanding of migrated identity, showing the several-layered cultural, social, and psychological negotiation upon gender.

The literature reviewed implies the same findings in a consistent manner as it suggests that migration shatters identity, creates hybrid and liminal selves, and introduces psychological, social and emotional difficulties. Although researchers analyzed the diasporic consciousness, postcolonial identity and hybridity, there are not many studies which combines textual analysis and psychological frameworks and social memory theory in a systematic manner. Specifically, the literature of Biju and other protagonists is not actively studied in terms of interdisciplinary research that takes into account mental health, cultural adaptation, and socio-economic precarity. This loophole indicates the necessity of a dedicated research on how migrated identity has affected the inner and outer life of the Desai characters in *The Inheritance of Loss*.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Overview

The research design employed in this study is qualitative research design which aims at exploring the effects of migrated identity on the protagonist in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*. The paper will focus on addressing the effect of migration, postcolonial settings, and diasporic consciousness on the psychological, cultural, and social aspects of the identity of the main character. Qualitative approach permits gaining a profound insight into the textual representation of migration and identity, and into the issue of narrative analysis, characters experience, and patterns. It is an interpretive study, which focuses more on the subjective and subtle nature of identity formation in the context of the diaspora. It combines the comparative knowledge of

postcolonial theory and diaspora studies on one hand and social-psychology perspective on the same subject to give a multi-dimensional explanation of the experiences of Biju and the overall effect of migration on individual and cultural identity.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Method of Data Collection

The primary source used in this research was the text of *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai (2006). This novel has been chosen due to its address of the diasporic experiences and identity negotiation in a detailed manner. The passages that emphasize the migration, assimilation, social alienation and memory problems of the main character were also denoted and selected to be analyzed. Along with the main text, secondary sources, such as research articles, journal articles, as well as theoretical texts, were also consulted to place the experiences of the protagonist in the larger context of postcolonialism, the diaspora theory, and social psychology. The analysis was supported by various research articles, which gave empirical, theoretical, and critical insights into the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The paper uses the qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis to discuss the influence of migrated identity on the protagonist in *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai. The textual data have been coded to reveal the recurring themes such as cultural hybridity, postcolonial consciousness, psychological effects and social memory. The process of analysis was conducted through a close reading and re-reading of the text to find out the instances of migration and identity negotiation, and then the instances were categorized into the thematic groups of alienation, nostalgia, and cultural adaptation. Postcolonial, diasporic, and social-psychological paradigms were then used to interpret these themes and triangulate them with secondary academic sources to confirm the results. This method made possible a methodical and stringent comprehension of the representation and experience of the identity of the protagonist, which gave not only a descriptive but also an interpretive understanding about intricacies of diasporic and postcolonial identity formation.

3.3. Theoretical Framework

This paper follows a postcolonial, diasporic, and social-psychological theoretical framework to explore how migrated identity affects the main character in Kiran Desai and *The Inheritance of Loss*. The postcolonial theory, specifically the idea of hybridity, mimicry, and the so-called third space by Bhabha (1994) are used to reflect the fluid and ambivalent shape of cultural identity whereas the idea of colonial legacies, as criticized by Said (1978) offers an insight into the internalized hierarchies and inferiority complexes. These issues are informed by diaspora studies, such as Hall (1990) view regarding the identity as an historically and socially constructed phenomenon, Brah (1996) idea of the homing desire, and concepts of living in-between cultures, as presented by Clifford (1994). Also, social-psychological approaches toward self-perception, identity construction and the emotional impact of migration (Blood, 2005; Grogan, 2008; Halprin, 1995), along with the linguistic and cultural adaptation, as described by Panicacci (n.d.), are used to comprehend the cognitive and emotional work of the negotiated migrated identity. The combination of these frameworks makes the study give a multidimensional view of how migration influences the internal and external life of the lead character and the interaction of cultural, psychological and social elements in the development of diasporic identity.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Data Analysis

The components that make up one's perception of migrant identity are rather complex. "Immigrant identity cannot be quantified or objectively judged; it is the result of others' perception," (Saltzberg and Chrisler, 1997, p.135). Nonetheless, the media may function similarly in other civilizations and cultures, establishing notions of "diaspora" and hybridity through transmitted material. Traditionally, studies on the recognition of hybrid identity have been centered on research that looks at immigrants in different countries. However, acceptance is not just determined by fluid identity; it also involves culture, social status, migrant identity, and diaspora mediation. However, migrant identity is created by a combination of factors, including diaspora mediation, race, color, creed, nonverbal conduct, conversation skills, and heredity. These results provide credence to the idea that diaspora mediation requires "fixed" identity in addition to expressive, social, and linguistic skills. Prior research offers a basis for enhanced comprehension of immigrants' assessments of diaspora in other immigrants, despite several elements being mostly unidentified. Furthermore, it is hard to determine what exactly makes an immigrant desirable or

whether attempts to set a "standard" of immigration would be successful due to the wide variety of cultural interpretations of migrant identity.

In previous research, high cross-cultural conformity in assessments of immigrant of various races was discovered. "If different people can agree on which migrant identity are appealing and which are not when assessing diaspora identity of diverse ethnic origins, then people everywhere are utilizing comparable criteria in their assessments," the study concludes. With types of cross cultural identity, country dimensions and forms posture, and immigrants' exposure, and so on, certain frameworks are widely used as immigration tenets for people of all ages, colors, and nationalities. With the expansion of Western media and its content onto a worldwide scale, greater attention has been paid to the way hybridity and post-colonialism are portrayed. Judgments of non-Western-looking individuals in the post-colonial era attempt to analyze the social position of men after colonialism. It enforces the idea that men make a healthy contribution to the societies of the world still it has been treated as an oppressed group who is unable to achieve their potential freedom in the societies. Post-Colonialism is an approach toward theory while a person who believes an act upon the theories of post-colonialism is called a post-colonial activist. Equality and emancipation of men are considered two major slogans of this term. The primary aim of post-colonial activist thought is to help men in order to develop awareness with their own existence; the descriptions of identity have placed more nervousness among men about the connection with their existence structure.

The concept of cultural hybridity and the manner in which blending and mixing cultures may produce new forms of identity and resistance to colonial powers are central to Homi K. Bhabha's thoughts on post-colonialism. As a critical place of resistance and negotiation in post-colonial cultures, Bhabha contends that the idea of the "Third Space"—the area where new cultural forms evolve between colonizer and colonized. In addition, he stresses the significance of understanding the ambiguity and complexity of post-colonial identities and the necessity of transcending basic dichotomies like East/West, self/other, and colonizer/colonized. The Pandhare views about diaspora in his research paper, Identity crises are among the most common issues in human existence, according to Kiran Desai's the novel *Inheritance of Loss: A Study in Identity Crises* we might argue that everyone lives in struggle since every man enters the world with an identity. Thus, "*Inheritance of Loss*" replicates. We can see in "*Inheritance of Loss*" that the protagonist lost their identity and at the last struggling for lost identity. In this novel every character struggle for their lost identity, because we can see that everyone leave their homeland for one reason or other.

The novel also depicts the radical transformations that Indians in the diaspora undergo, presenting a multitude of perspectives on cultural otherness and the effects of globalization on individual identities. The characters' journey through loss and their attempts to forge new identities mirror the broader challenges faced by diasporic communities (Soy, 2009). According to Marson and Hessmiller (2016), the negative aspects of migration have always been prevalent among the population of displaced people, but in scholarly literature, the psychological burden of the mentioned phenomenon has often been undervalued. This silence is interrupted in the story of Desai. Another affect her characters experience in foreign lands is being physically wounded as well as psychologically dislocated, their identity being torn between the memories of their native land and the realities of the foreign life. This shows that the implications of migration are not limited to economics or geography but trickle down to the very minds of the migrant and define how he or she views himself and his/her position in the world.

Experts, like Blood (2005), say that the immigrants tend to decrease the burden on the society by changing their lives in the host world and not drastically transforming themselves to reflect the perfect diaspora identities. Nevertheless, the congestions to fit in are too strong. Halprin (1995) emphasises the problem of non-support and self-acceptance that causes people to internalise distorted standards of identities and drives them towards self-hate and alienation. The argument is reminiscent of the one Desai gives her main character, whose identity crisis is not merely the external one caused by discrimination and exclusion but the internal one, as she experiences doubts in herself and always feels inferior. Grogan (2008) further states that the importance of educational and health programs should contribute to effective identity formation at the individual and communal levels, which is why it is important to have the systemic support during the isolating nature of migration.

All these challenges are complicated by the fact that international criteria of success and beauty are made homogenous. The studies of hybridity and cultural conformity indicate that people in various cultures tend to make similar criterion in regards to the consideration of appearances, performances, and values. The Western media has been influential in this process and it has spread homogenous standards of attractiveness, lifestyle, and belonging. These globalized criteria, in the case of Desai protagonist, contribute to an already stressful undertaking of identity negotiation in that the protagonist has to balance the cultural values he has inherited against the demands of a new, globalized world. What ensues is a broken identity between the familiar and the foreign, the local and the global.

The other imperative dimension is the contribution of social memory on creating identity. Since birth, people store extensive amount of cultural knowledge such as language, traditions, rituals, and social practices that form the corner stone of their self. This accumulation of knowledge gets constantly reinforced by the institutions, communities and media thus creating what the scholars term as the social memory. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Desai presents the way in which migration interferes with this continuity. The recollections of India that the protagonist has, its scenery, traditions, and family time are in a sharp contrast with the alienation that she feels in foreign countries. This dislocation depicts that migration not only breaks the present but also the recalled past thus shaking the very cornerstone of identity.

His theory of postcolonial hybridity by Bhabha (1994) is particularly applicable in this situation. His model demonstrates that postcolonial subjects exist in the in-between spaces and identities are negotiated and redefined there. The main character in the novel by Desai exists in this liminal zone, in which both the motherland and the host country fail to give him any sense of belonging. Instead, the process of identity is perceived as a discontinuous fragmented one. To illustrate this fragmentation, the memories of Biju can be taken as the relics of my childhood with all its joyfulness and completeness: These pictures of the photo albums are the remains of the time when I was happy and complete. They are testimony to the fact that I used to be home at one moment (p. 33). The desire of the entire self is in agonizing contrast to the current divided reality, which speaks of the psychological effects of migration.

The portrayal of the immigrants oppressed, marginalized, and displaced by Desai is one of the characteristics of her humanistic perspective. She places her story in between both the native and foreign backgrounds, and it unveils the multifaceted aspects of postcolonial life. The former prosperous subcontinent turned battle-tattered by colonialism and globalization is the setting of the immigrant struggles. The relations of characters with colonizers and their descendants show that the colonial past continues to inform identity and brings about a sense of inferiority, dependency and alienation. The tale of the protagonist is symbolic of a greater group trauma in which the concept of migration is not only literal displacement but a radical psychological and cultural one as well.

Finally, *The Inheritance of Loss* demonstrated migration not as a solution to problems but as a source of more significant identity crises. The main character is the incarnation of the dilemma of diaspora: the need to belong and the inability to belong in its entirety. The success of migrants is a myth that Desai, through her subtle depiction, challenges and shows the cost of uprootedness, which is in many cases, not a gain, but a loss.

4.2. Discussion

As the analysis of Kiran Desai *The Inheritance of Loss* proves, migrated identity is complex, including psychological, cultural and social aspects. The events that Biju goes through illustrate the conflict between the homeland and the hostland adjustment, showing the hybrid and liminal state of the diasporic identity (Bhabha, 1994; Clifford, 1994). Migration, as Shrestha (2023) and Albuhamdan et al. (2022) mention, brings external (economic uncertainties and social discrimination) and internal (alienation and self-doubt) problems. Nostalgia, cultural negotiation, and hybridity are the themes that the thematic analysis evaluates as key experiences that shape the identity of the protagonist, which is supported by Hall (1990) claim that identity is a socially and historically constructed entity.

On the psychological front, the research is consistent with those provided by Blood (2005), Grogan (2008), and Halprin (1995) in that immigrant people tend to absorb the social and cultural norms, which lead to self-perception problems and emotional pressures. Panicacci (n.d.) also notes cognitive and emotional work involved in having to operate within a number of cultural systems, which is also manifested in Biju being in both Indian and American worlds. In addition, social memory is also decisive, and memories of childhood and home, of the protagonist, serve as the landmarks of the cultural identity (Assmann, 2010; Shrestha, 2023). Gender dimensions and intersectional dimension are also analysed in the light of gendered migration, which is as perceived by Komal Rashmi and Kumar (n.d.) where they reveal that both men and women are affected in the bargaining of diasporic identity. The discussion generally highlights that migrated identity is constructed and imposed through historical, cultural as well as psychological influences.

5. Conclusion

This paper concludes that migrated identity has a significant impact on the main character of *The Inheritance of Loss* and it has influenced his cultural, social, and psychological state. The study emphasises the negotiated selfhood in diasporic situations, demonstrating that identity is not fixed or unique, but hybrid, fluid, and in a constant process of change. Migration brings problems of alienation, nostalgia, and self-perception and also provides chances of cultural adjustment and strength. Both postcolonial, diasporic, and social-psychological views combine to give a multidimensional explanation of migration as a determinant of internal consciousness as well as the behavior of the external world. This paper has added to the research on

diaspora and postcolonial identity by bridging the textual interpretation to the psychological and sociocultural model to show how the interpretation of migrated identity is relevant in the modern-day literary research.

References

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *Postcolonial studies: The key concepts* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities*. Routledge.
- Cash, P. (2004). *Diaspora identity and self-perception: The migrant experience*. *Journal of Migration Studies*, 2(1), 1–15.
- Desai, K. (2006). *The Inheritance of Loss*. Penguin Books.
- Ferber, A. L. (2010). *The social construction of race and ethnicity: Power, privilege, and inequality*. Routledge.
- Hamza, A. (2022). Postcolonial identity in contemporary Indian literature: A critical analysis. *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 15(3), 45–62.
- Hammersley, M. (2013). *The social construction of reality: Implications for migration studies*. Oxford University Press.
- Jay, P. (2018). Diasporic narratives and hybrid identity in contemporary literature. *Literary Review of India*, 7(2), 88–104.
- Loomba, A. (2015). *Colonialism/postcolonialism* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Mishra, V. (2018). *Diaspora and identity: A transnational perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Patel, V. (2017). Indian diasporic literature: Memory, identity, and belonging. *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 12(2), 105–120.
- Reddy, S. (1993). Close reading and textual analysis in literary studies. *Indian Journal of Literary Criticism*, 4(1), 33–49.
- Shrestha, R. (2022). Migration, alienation, and hybridity in modern Indian novels. *Asian Literary Studies*, 8(1), 21–37.
- Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism*. Routledge.